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THE BLACK HEAD.

A Cornish Story.

MERTHEN was very quiet when I paid it my usual visit last autumn. It was quite late in the season, and the little seaside village was almost deserted. Kind-hearted motherly widow Peters, who keeps the Merthen Arms, welcomed me with almost more than her usual cordiality. Her son Sam, active and willing, was in immediate attendance. On his broad shoulders my portmanteau preceded me to my chamber—the old familiar room, clean and sweet, smelling of lavender and of the salt sea-air that poured in through the open window. I soon unpacked my traps and settled my domestic arrangements to my liking, and then I descended to my sitting-room—in neatness and sweetness and cosiness the counterpart of the chamber above—to find my evening meal awaiting me. Widow Peters is a good cook, and I had brought to the banquet the best of all sauces, hunger, so you may be sure I did her efforts ample justice. I believe, after all, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. At all events, I felt at peace with all the world as, in response to my bell, Mrs. Peters came in to clear away the things, and, if the truth must be told, to engage in a little gossip. 'Yes, she had had a good season. A full house and plenty of visitors. The gentlemen and ladies who came first had been kind and had liked the place, she supposed, for they had recommended others.' This was important to Mrs. Peters. Not long before, she had metamorphosed the tiny mud-walled brown-thatched inn I had known from my boyish days into a fairly large and convenient modern hotel. It was a bold stroke at fortune, and sorry though I was to miss the old house, I knew its wholesome ways would remain, and I was glad to know that the honest widow's venture had so far proved successful. 'Yes, a full house and a good season; and she hoped she was thankful for it. It was a home for her, and it would be Sam's after she was gone.' Now the quiet time had come. 'You have the house to yourself, sir,' she said, 'and I hope you will be comfortable. We always do our best to please you, and I hope if you want anything you will ring the bell;' with which prosaic conclusion the excellent woman benignly smiled upon me, and departed, closing the door behind her.

Evening had come by this time; so, with one glance over the fast-

darkening bay, I drew the curtains close, and, wheeling an easy-chair to the fire, sat still in happy meditation, full of impossible plans for the next fortnight. I would boat, fish, tramp, bathe, climb, read, write, do everything, do nothing. Then my thoughts went back to earlier days spent on this same wild shore, and as the all-pervading moan of the sea, never absent from Merthen, penetrated window and curtain and door, I fell into a half doze, and began to live the amphibious life of my boyish days over again. Then came a tap at the door, and the spell was broken. My old friend the rector had heard of my arrival, and had called in to welcome me. So by the fire we two sat and talked—talked 'shop,' which, notwithstanding the abuse heaped upon it, is, I maintain, the best sort of talk. We both loved Merthen, and we talked of little else. The season had been a pleasant one; the weather splendid, the visitors numerous; now all had left save one family. The parish was prospering, the people were happy and at harmony, the congregations had increased so much that my friend had found it absolutely needful to enlarge the parish-church. Here, too, the visitors had been most kind, but none so kind as the one family that still remained—the Browns. The rector was loud in their praises. To an outsider, he admitted, they might seem eccentric people. They had chosen as their residence a lonely cottage beyond the village, perched almost on the cliff-edge, and here they lived quite apart, receiving no visitors save himself now and then. But for all this there was a reason. They were a family devoted to each other; father, mother, and two sons, one of whom was a sad invalid, somewhat disordered in his mind, and, though perfectly quiet, subject to strange fancies. He regularly attended church with his family, but otherwise he avoided all society, and almost shunned the light of day, but was passionately addicted to long nocturnal rambles along the cliffs, in which his father and brother, as was natural, invariably accompanied him. Of course as a result the Browns were quite shut out from the world. The rector was full of sympathy for them. They were such good people, true and kind, refined and intellectual also. Mrs. Brown was evidently a lady. Mr. Brown and his eldest son were cultivated men. But the younger son's affliction, of course, overshadowed the whole family, and forced them to live apart. Still they were valuable people. As far as they could see, Merthen would of necessity be for a long time their home. They were cordially disposed to the rector; between him and the elder son, indeed, a friendship had almost matured, for they had much in common, the latter inclining to holy orders. To the poor they were most kind, making, however, the rector the channel of their unobtrusive alms; and they had, besides, given fifty pounds towards the enlargement of the church, and had accompanied the gift with a delicate suggestion that more would be forthcoming if needed. Evidently these strange sadly-fated people were well-to-do and liberal; and I could not help deeming my friend fortunate in the fact that they had chosen his by no means wealthy parish as their place of sojourn.

The evening wore away pleasantly enough, and at length I was again alone. I was soon in my cosy bed, and almost as soon wrapped in dreamless slumber. I had no sooner closed my eyes

than morning seemed to dawn at once. I woke thoroughly refreshed, however, and, hastily donning my garments, I walked rapidly to the beach for my morning bathe. I had come at a bad time. It was high water on almost the highest spring tide of the year, and all my favourite haunts were inaccessible. Still I was not to be baulked. A strip of beach yet remained uncovered. Bathing was not impossible; and I was soon plunging amongst the huge rollers, that came sweeping as though they would swallow not only me, but all Merthen into the bargain. They were perfectly harmless, however; it was only their way of giving me a friendly welcome; and rough though their embraces were, I parted from them wonderfully refreshed in body and mind, and hungry with an almost inappeasable hunger. I did manage to satisfy my ravenous appetite, however, at Mrs. Peters' well-spread board; and breakfast over, I sought to map out my day. One adventure suggested itself to me at once. This, as I have said, was almost the highest spring tide of the year. At dead low water a famous cavern at the base of the Black Head would be for once accessible. It was long since I had seen it last. I would visit it to-day. So, after lingering a while in my room, I sauntered again to the beach, and watched the tide as it receded, and left moment by moment a wider strip of beach, and abandoned post after post. As the shore uncovered I walked further and further westward, until at length I stood at the foot of the Black Head, and paused beneath its mighty frowning wall of wave-polished rock. A moment more, and I had gained the cavern entrance, and was once again passing beneath its portal.

A wild weird place it was, vast and echoing and dim, a very sea-king's palace. I walked to its furthest verge, and sat in the gloom and looked seawards. It was the old scene—old and ever new. The cavern entrance, fringed with tangled seaweed, framed such a picture as human hand will never paint: the yellow sand; the white foam on the shore; beyond, the breaking wave; again beyond, the opal sea; and above all, the blue cloudless sky. You cannot describe the scene. If you have seen it once, you remember it for ever. If you have never seen it, Ruskin himself could not describe it to you. Its wonder is unutterable. I lingered fascinated until I could linger no longer. The cave was only free for half an hour. That time had almost elapsed since I entered it, and I rapidly sought its mouth, to find the tide fast racing in. I was just passing to the wider beach on the Merthen side, when my eye fell upon a golden gleam that shot up from the inner fringe of the advancing water. It was reflected from a coin. I saw it quick as thought. Almost as quickly I saw another and another, a little handful of gold. My heart beat quick. Was some untold treasure of the sea revealing itself to me? I rushed to meet the advancing wave, and fiercely grasped at the fading gleam beneath. I had not made my plunge in vain. There was no time to lose. Wet almost to the skin, I raced shorewards, clutching my prize. Recovering my breath, I looked instinctively towards the cavern, to see that the ground on which I stood a moment since was a mass of seething water. Then I looked upon the treasure, and found that I was the possessor of a handful of glittering sovereigns. I could hardly believe my eyes; but yet

they did not deceive me. What wonder, then, was here? I had heard of shipwrecked treasures, hopelessly lost to their owners, given up by the greedy sea after long years. Had such good fortune come to me? These golden coins must have left good company behind them. Surely wealth lay somewhere buried on that shore. Then I looked at my prize again. Another wonder: the coins were new, their date 1875. I fingered them once more. A sudden thought crossed my mind, and I resolved on an old-fashioned simple test. I put one coin between my teeth, and bit it. It yielded grittily to the impact. Pah! I was disenchanted in a moment. I thrust my worthless prize into my pocket with a disgusted exclamation. They were all counterfeit.

The disappointment was only momentary. As I sat over my midday meal, I even felt disposed to rally myself on the deception of which I had been the victim. Still I was curious. How came these coins to the mouth of the Black Head cavern? Not from a shipwrecked vessel, certainly. Counterfeit money is not often part of a cargo; and if in this case it had been, and had been lost upon this shore, the beach would have been strewed with wreckage, and for a long time past not even a piece of driftwood had been washed in. Slowly revolving the matter in my mind, I at last hit on what was to me a satisfactory solution of the mystery. In the nearest market-town, not more than nine miles distant, there had been palmed off upon an unsuspecting public a considerable number of counterfeit sovereigns. At length the fraud was discovered, and a diligent search was made for the coiners. But these easily eluded the grasp of the local police, and they and their false gold disappeared from the scene. Could it be possible that, as the easiest way of avoiding detection, these bold vagabonds had in the most natural way taken a country walk, and from the tall summit of the Black Head had dropped their lying counters into the sea? It *was* quite possible, I thought. At all events, this was as good a theory as any other, and I could hope for no other solution of the mystery, for it would be some months ere the mouth of the Black Head cavern would again be accessible. Meanwhile, uncertain what to do with my worthless treasure, I put it temporarily in a corner of my portmanteau, and sat down to study my newspaper.

Again a tap at my door. This time my visitor was Sam Peters. He was going fishing with some companions, he said. The sea had gone down, and there was every prospect of a fine night. The doctor was going with them. Would I like to join the party? Of course I would. The doctor was an old acquaintance, the fishermen were all old friends, and the offer of a night's fishing I could never resist. Sam retired to complete his preparations, and I lay down to snatch a little sleep until the hour for departure. When I awoke it was five o'clock. I had an hour yet to spare ere the fishing crew would assemble, so I made up my mind to call for Dr. Jolly. I found him at home putting his fishing-gear in order. Our hearty greetings over, we set out for the beach. On the way we passed a little group of strangers—an elderly lady and gentleman and two younger men, both tall and well made, but one of the two muffled almost to the mouth in warm wraps, and walking with his eyes fixed on the

ground, oblivious of everything around him. The rest courteously responded to my friend's salutation, and slowly passed on. 'The Browns,' said the doctor. 'Excellent people; sad case. The poor young fellow's mind, I should fear, is hopelessly going. He is dreadfully obstinate, they tell me, and will not see a medical man; so his parents and his brother have to do their best for him unaided. A most devoted family!'

Here the doctor somewhat abruptly ended his recital; for we were on the beach and close to our boat. There is no pier at Merthen. You must get into your craft and wait the pleasure of the tide. Here we had not long to wait. Our friends were already at their oars. Jolly and I leaped in, just in time to escape wet feet; and then the spring tide, impelled by the soft westerly breeze, came rushing in, lifting our broad-beamed boat as though she were a bit of cork, their helpless plaything. Their plaything perhaps; but not helpless. The stout fishermen plied their oars with a will; and their long, slow, steady strokes soon drew us far away from the sandy beach. Sam Peters was coxswain. Jolly and I sat on either side of him, putting the finishing touches to our lines; and so we swept on across the bay, until, in an hour's time, we found ourselves upon the fishing-ground, and anchored in the shallower waters over the Banks, the favourite fishing haunt.

What a lovely evening it was! Already far to the west and well behind us the sun was setting in all his splendour, filling the sea with indescribable colours, and touching the least romantic objects on the shore with beauty. The village was like a toy village now; but every tiny pane of glass in every house that faced the west gleamed like a diamond; the inner beach was almost too bright to look upon; the cliffs were brown and black no longer, they were crimson now. Far inland we could see the bare stubble of the harvest-fields and the brown thatch of many a farmhouse touched with the same strange glow. Above all there showed already the faint glimmer of the starlight; and as this waxed stronger the light behind us faded slowly, and at length ceased to be. Night had come; but the beauty of the scene had not died with the sunset. A calmer, but more subtle, radiance now pervaded sky and land and sea. The village houses and the cottages inland seemed to answer back the dead daylight. There were lights on the distant hills, lights on the shore, lights in the sky, reflected lights on the water. The hills and cliffs still showed in shadowy outlines like a landscape seen in dreams. The waves plashed musically round us and died away into infinite dimness and darkness. Our boat swayed to their gentle motion. There was scarcely a sound to be heard save the murmur of the water. Occasionally a faint cry from the shore would come ghostlike across the sea, the bark of a dog, attenuated to a spectral voice, would reach us; or the scream of a gull, disturbed by some nocturnal visitor on the distant cliffs; but for the rest there was silence. Even the men said little; they were absorbed in their fishing. Ere long the excitement of a bite roused me from my reverie, and I joined actively in the sport; for fish were plentiful. And as the night wore on many and many a fine fellow was lifted over the gunwale and left to his meditations in the bottom of the boat, where he railed against Fate

with many a leap and mighty thump of his tail until he succumbed to the inevitable.

It was nearly midnight, when Peters made a sudden exclamation.

'Bill,' he said to one of the men, 'just look at the Black Head! There is the light again!'

I looked with the rest, and saw a small thin gleam of bright light shining, as far as I could judge, about fifty feet below the summit of the great western cliff. It did not excite my curiosity very much. I took it to be the lantern of one of the coastguardsmen whom duty might have called to the spot. But at length I became interested; for, to my surprise, the light continued stationary. I looked at Jolly, and almost fancied—for I could not be sure in the darkness—that he was startled also. We said nothing, but listened to the men. I found from their conversation that this mysterious light had been visible from the fishing-grounds for some nights past. The men had evidently varying theories about it; but to one conclusion they had all come—it was supernatural.

'Yes, there it is,' said long-legged Bill Johns. 'There it is, sure enough. It's they piskies. Catch me going to the Black Head after dark! I went there once in the night, Sam; but I'll never go there no more. I've been there hundreds of times by day, and know the road as well as anybody; but that night I lost myself as sure as if I was in the wilds of Afrikey, and if I hadn't my wits about me I should have gone over cliff.'

'You were piskey-laden,' said Sam.

'In course,' replied Bill.

'How did you get out of your trouble?' I inquired, well knowing what the answer would be.

'I did 'em, the varmint,' said Bill triumphantly. 'They wasn't going to lead me a dance. I sat down, sir, took off my right stocking, turned 'en inside out, put 'en on again, and that very minute I see'd my way as plain as if 'twas daylight. Home I went, and never looked behind me. No more Black Head for me—no, not if there was a thousand piskey-lights to slock* me on.'

Some of the men acquiesced in Bill's theory; others held that it was a ghost light pure and simple—the work of some murderer, who, hanged and buried there a century back, now sought to lure the hapless wayfarer to swift destruction; others that it was an 'old man's' light (a light of bad omen, that hangs about ancient and discarded mine-workings). But one and all agreed that the Black Head was a haunted place, and that the man who dreamt of visiting it after dark was a fool for his pains.

The night wore on, and still our fishing was successful. I divided my attention between my lines and the light. The latter shone on until the first streak of dawn, and then it vanished in an instant. With the dawn weariness stole over the party. We were sated with sport and almost overcome by sleep. With one consent the lines were wound up and put away; and in the fast-flooding daylight we sped homewards over the quiet waters. Ere long the party separated. Jolly and I had a word ere we parted.

'Shall we unfathom the Black Head mystery to-night?' said he.

'With all my heart,' I replied. 'It will be something of an adventure.'

So agreeing to meet at my inn in the evening, we went our several ways.

I am not ashamed to own that

* 'Slock' is Cornish for 'tempt.'

I reached home tired out. But my thoughtful landlady would not hear of my going to bed until I had taken some food. A composite meal of tempting nature and huge extent, a sort of breakfast-supper, awaited me. I did it but scant justice, I am afraid, though I did manage to swallow a few mouthfuls out of regard for Mrs. Peters' peace of mind. Then somehow—I scarcely know how, I was so utterly wearied—I found myself in bed. The old-fashioned eight-day clock on the stairs at that moment, after sundry groans and sighs and knocks, alarming to the uninitiated, struck the hour of seven, and at once I was launched upon another sea—a sea of dreams. For hours I was landing fish such as mortal fisherman never saw; riding now on waves mountains high, now on waters placid as a mirror; sitting beneath stars that rained down light upon me—light that streamed into the boat and loaded it with sovereigns until it sank, and left me floating alone upon the sea, to struggle shorewards amongst the breakers, until again I found myself in the Black Head cavern, cast up half dead upon the beach, to realise my hapless lot, a prisoner feeble and half dead, the captive of the waves. I groaned in my despair, and awoke to find the bright afternoon sunshine streaming into my room, and Jolly seated in an easy-chair by the open window.

'Glad you're awake, old fellow,' he said; 'you have been having a bad time of it for the past quarter of an hour. Besides, it's nearly two o'clock, an hour at which all respectable people should be up and stirring. We have our plans to mature, if you please; so there is no time to be lost. Tumble out of bed whilst I wait for you in the sitting-room.'

My first impulse, as he left me, was to resume my slumbers; but finding myself, despite my adventures in dreamland, sensibly refreshed, I leaped out of bed, dispelled the last of my weariness in my morning tub, and ere long joined my friend in the room below. Jolly looked as bright and lively as though he had had a week of absolute repose. He had scarcely slept at all, he told me; but then he was so accustomed to broken rest, that a quiet night on the waters was a sort of holiday for him.

Sitting by the fire, we matured our plans. At first I was inclined to tell my friend of my adventure in the cavern; but on second thoughts I resolved for the present to keep that to myself. Besides, the one had no connection with the other, and to introduce the topic would distract our minds from the adventure on which we were bent. The strange light piqued our curiosity, and we were determined to fathom the mystery. Ghosts, goblins, fairies, pixies, or, worse, smugglers or thieves, we would possess the secret of the mysterious gleam ere another morning dawned. Jolly was a new-comer to Merthen, and did not know the Black Head well. Though not a Merthen man, I had made the village my second home for years. I knew all the prominent places on the coast-line, and the by-paths and strange intricacies of the Black Head were all thoroughly familiar to me. A very strange place it was. Viewed from the sea, it showed a cliff-face some four hundred feet high, apparently quite perpendicular; but in reality it was externally traversed by several narrow foot-tracks and gullies, and internally by tunnels innumerable. In days beyond human memory the cliff had been worked for tin by the

'old men,' the pre-historic miners, and these had burrowed like rabbits until they had pierced the great cliff through and through. Often as a boy I had wandered along these strange ancient ways, these forsaken haunts of early industry, now silent as the grave, and in company with my fellows had lived a sort of Robinson Crusoe life, to my intense delectation. The Robinson Crusoe days had departed long ago; but my fondness for an adventure remained, and the temptation now was irresistible. Still caution was necessary. I was forced to own to myself that, ignorant as he was of the locality, Jolly would rather be a hindrance than a help. We must be a party of three, that was clear; and when I suggested that Sam Peters should be admitted to our counsels, my friend made no objection.

Sam was sent for, and soon made his appearance. At first he did not relish the scheme at all, and declined to join us.

'He didn't see any good in tempting Providence,' he said. 'The light was there, safe enough. If it meant no harm, let it abide; if it did, we had best keep out of danger.'

But Sam, if superstitious, was no coward, and, like most healthy plucky young fellows, liked, as he said, 'to see the inside of a thing;' and so, after a little further persuasion, he came round, and reflecting, I suppose, that three men surely were more than a match for the pixies, he entered heartily into our plans. There was really little to arrange. We were of course to keep our own counsel. We were to remain at the inn until night, and then, with a good cudgel apiece, we would betake ourselves to the Black Head, and solve the mystery.

I must confess that the rest of the day seemed a little wearisome; the hours lagged sadly; but the longest day comes to an end at last, and so did this. We curbed our impatience until ten o'clock, and then, unable to bear the suspense any longer, we three sallied forth, gained the cliffs, and in single file wound our way along the narrow overhanging paths until we found ourselves ascending the highest cliff of all, and knew we were on the broad summit of the Black Head. We had brought no lights with us, as we had no intention of exploring the tunnels in the hill; it was my wish rather to devote our time to careful watching and to an exploration of the paths on the cliff-face. It was a dark night, and very still. Far below we could catch sometimes the phosphorescent gleam of a breaker on the shore, and we could hear the boom of the waves in the caverns beneath our feet; but other light or other sound we saw none. For full two hours we cautiously explored the dizzy paths that led from level to level of the old mine-workings; but our explorations were fruitless, and, weary and somewhat dispirited, we sat down in a little shelter, about ten feet below the cliff-summit, and there rested in silence. The scene was a wonderfully impressive one, and at any other time I think two of us at least would have been almost fascinated by the strange weirdness of our surroundings; but for the moment we felt rather humiliated than impressed, for it seemed as though we had embarked on a fool's errand, and that Sam—who, by the way, appeared dreadfully sleepy—would have the laughing side of us. Still we lingered, unwilling to abandon our hopes; and as we lingered something happened that caused us almost

THE SECRET OF THE LIGHT.

See 'The Black Head: a Cornish Story.'

to leap from our seats, and made our hearts beat high, for twenty feet or more below us there shot out across the darkness the thin bright streak of light which only twenty-four hours before had startled us at sea. We craned our necks over the little barrier that hedged us in, but could see nothing that revealed to us the cause of the mystery; still in the silence and the darkness the gleam shone on. At once I bethought myself of an old abandoned half path, half watercourse that descended from near where we stood to above this lower level. It was a most unsafe path to the unpractised foot, but not absolutely dangerous to one who knew it well and could hold on by hand as well as by feet. With a hurried whisper I rose to my feet and led the way, and the others followed. It was slow wearisome work. We had to make sure of our footing in the dark; this was no easy matter; then we wished also that our approach should be silent, for even a rolling stone would make a startling and unaccustomed noise at that unearthly hour. For some little distance the track on the seaward side was quite unprotected: a single false step, and we should have been plunged into the water four hundred feet below. Still the excitement braced our nerves, and we went slowly on. Presently we found ourselves in a gully; the watercourse had deviated inwards somewhat, and a natural wall of soft rock fenced us from the sea. A few steps further on our pathway made a sudden bend, still inwards; and just in front of us, across the path, and from an aperture above our heads, there glowed, bright and large, the light whose source we sought. I could see in a moment that only a fraction of the beam was visible from the sea, and only this fraction because a minute portion of the rocky wall on the left had recently given way. Half wild with excitement, though outwardly calm, we rested for a brief pause beneath the aperture, which seemed to be a very narrow slit in the inner cliff-face,—say three or four inches wide and two feet long,—and we for the first time heard the sound of voices. The secret of the light was almost ours. By virtue, I suppose, of my position as leader of the expedition, Jolly 'made a back' for me, and I mounted and peeped through the slit. A moment's glance told the whole story, and fairly took my breath away.

I saw a small cavern, fairly well lit, and supplied with various appliances whose use I could but dimly understand, and there three men stood, busily at work. Could I believe my eyes? I had seen those three men only the morning before. There was the fatherly Mr. Brown, with his sleeves tucked up, his whole mind absorbed in his occupation; there was the interesting invalid Brown, an invalid no longer, hard at work also, the jolliest and strongest of the three; and as for the good Mr. Brown—the Mr. Brown who was preparing for holy orders—his occupation, I am sorry to say, was now of a much more reprehensibly mundane character. He was engaged in deftly counting into little piles a heap of glittering sovereigns, which on either hand was flanked by a brace of revolvers. The estimable, devoted, wealthy, church-restoring Browns were nothing more or less than desperadoes, a little company of coiners.

It takes of course some minutes to write this; but you can readily understand that I saw it at a glance. I had descended from my friend's back almost as soon as I had mounted it. I could not

utter a word. Astonishment had bereft me of speech. I simply helped him to 'a back' in turn. He was down with equal speed; and then I gratified Sam with a glimpse. In the light which the Browns had so unconsciously afforded us, we looked at one another in blank helpless astonishment. What could we do? Evidently nothing. There were no signs of entrance to the cave save the tell-tale chink through which we had taken our private view; and if we had found the entrance, what could unarmed men do against two brace of revolvers? Not a word was whispered; but this was the unanimous argument of our separate brains. Silently I headed the retreat; and ere long we three had gained once more on the Black Head, and were with all possible speed making our way home.

The rest of the story is soon told. We reached the inn, not to sleep, but to mature our plans. Now, of course, I read the riddle of my treasure-trove. Through some accident a few coins had fallen from the rascals' hands into the sea below. This would not trouble them much, for they would trust to the waves to keep their secret; and in that they were right, for their discovery gave me no hint of the workshop above. And, for the rest, they had laid their plans well and shrewdly. They had played their part of an afflicted family to perfection: their courteous manners and unobtrusive charities had won for them the favour of all. They had chosen as the scene of their operations a remote Cornish village, whose inhabitants had no cause to suspect them; they had made a forgotten cave in a desolate cliff their workshop, and there they only ventured to labour when the country-side was asleep. They might have gone on undiscovered for months, had not a bit of barrier-wall given way unperceived, and let loose a tell-tale gleam to wanton across the sea. But the hour had come and the man (I suppose I was the man), and their knavery was unmasked.

Within a mile there dwelt a resident magistrate. To him with earliest daylight we went, calling for the local policeman on our way. He listened to our story almost with incredulity until I showed him my coins, intrusting them to his care. Then he saw the gravity of the case. I am not a lawyer, and do not understand the usual technicalities, but I have no doubt they were duly observed. No time was to be lost, that was evident, and considerable precautions would be necessary to prevent the coiners from taking alarm. Ere this, no doubt, they were at home and sound asleep. So a gang of men, guided by the three heroes of the night before and accompanied by the magistrate, went quietly across the country, descended the cliff-path, and, first making sure that the cave was empty, enlarged the slit by the aid of crowbars, until one by one we were able to creep through. The cave proved to be a small one, and its main entrance a tunnel of considerable width, through which a man in a stooping position could easily walk. Securing its contents—the entire stock-in-trade of the company—we passed through this entrance to full daylight again. The mouth of the cave was entirely hidden by thick bushes of gorse, and it opened into a secluded gully, from which one could only ascend to the cliff-side by a narrow tortuous path. At length we were safely on the hills, and, unobserved,

contrived to convey our prizes to the magistrate's residence. The next step was to secure the offenders; and this proved an easier task than we had anticipated. The constable, already in plain clothes, and accompanied by his workmen of the morning in their mining habiliments—for miners they really were—lingered amongst the cliffs until they saw the Browns leaving their home for their usual evening walk. Then, in a commendably natural manner, the labourers sauntered towards the village, met the Browns, closed in on them, the policeman politely introduced himself, and they were secured in a moment. The rest is told in a sentence. They first visited the magistrate, then the county gaol; an interview with her Majesty's judges followed; and, the evidence against them proving overwhelming, a grateful country provided the entire family with a retirement even more secluded than that of the lonely cottage on the Merthen cliff.

The villagers of course were startled out of all propriety, and the rector was shocked; but I am glad to add, by way of postscript, that the fifty pounds the Browns gave towards the enlargement of the church was current money of the realm; and, as it was never called for, it helped to defray the cost of a much-needed improvement. The money bestowed in charity also was honest coin. So for once, rascals though they were, the Browns did good by mistake.

S. P.

WHY GO AWAY?

By W. W. Fenn, author of 'Half-Hours of Blind Man's Holiday,' 'After Sundown,' etc.

Why, indeed? I was listening the other night to a charming singer of ballads, when this question occurred to me with more than its usual importunity. The scene was a London drawing-room, the time July. The haunts of society had already begun to reverberate with a certain inane query, which rises involuntarily, it would seem, to everybody's lips towards the close of the season; and this it was which provoked my self-questioning, and, as it always does, raised my ire. 'Where are you going?' had been buzzed in one's ears from morning to night, wherever one went, for more than a week past, and the room was resonant with the inquiry even as I listened to the fair and accomplished vocalist. She was Irish, and from the little talk I happened to have with her I could see she felt as strongly on this point as I did, and I suspect it was her naturally sly humour which prompted her to make the selection she did from her *répertoire;* for, not content with having executed in the most touching, pathetic, and melodious fashion, that ballad of our youth, 'Home, Sweet Home,' she began—on being encored, and with a most wicked twinkle in her beautiful blue eyes—another version of the same theme, the burden of which was:

> 'The dearest spot on earth to me
> Is home, sweet home.'

Evidently she had a notion of 'poking fun' at the company, and desired delicately, but sarcastically, to 'show up' the inconsistency of a body of people who could, in one breath, go into gushing raptures over the sentiment of her songs, and in the next give all their thoughts as to how best to get away from what everybody professed to agree with her in considering 'the dearest spot on earth.' At least, this is how I interpreted her line of conduct; for truly it is an odd and contradictory condition of mind which induces the English people, with their well-known addiction to the sweets and comforts of home, to be at such pains as they are, when August sets in, to try and escape from them. One would think that the voluntary tribulation, annoyance, and expense which they inflict upon themselves annually in order to get away from their native land is due to the fact that it is the ugliest, worst governed, and most objectionable country on the globe. That this migratory propensity has become a nuisance, no less than an inconsistency, is beginning to be widely and quite as readily admitted by many who, from force of habit, put themselves through the torture of travel, as well as by those who more wisely at times act up to the belief that the dearest spot on earth is home, and are contented to stay there, even though the time is August and the scene London. Why, at any rate, should those who may honestly desire to 'see the wonders of the world

abroad' bother other people on the subject in the way they do? Why can they not go and see what they want, and come back and say nothing about it? Why, when they have once made up their minds to start on their travels, should they consider it their chief social duty to be constantly asking everybody they meet the impertinent question, 'Where are *you* going?' They do not really want to know; it cannot signify to them a pin's point. Just as if Dawkins cared one farthing whether Hawkins was going to Homburg or Honolulu; the notion is preposterous! Yet Dawkins and Hawkins and Bawkins will go on boring each other backwards and forwards, up and down, with this inane query for weeks.

A faithful and contented Londoner, one who loves his home, and who has the courage of his opinions, is justified, surely, if he now and then expresses a little mild indignation, and resents the impertinence of this attempt to pry into his private affairs and movements. What wonder if it should raise his ire, and make him regard the end of the London season with terror and abhorrence? Is it not possible that to him 'London is the best place in summer, and the only place in winter'? Many a good man and true has thought so and said so, though I forget who originated the assertion in its epigrammatic form. Why, therefore, should everybody suppose that he desires to escape from it? What has he done that the soundness of his judgment should be impugned? Why should it be assumed that he is going anywhere?

What is worse, too, he knows that this is but the beginning of a lengthened period, during which he will have to endure similar assaults upon his privacy, and that he will be plunged, as time goes on, into yet deeper depths of irritating inquiry, before that untroubled existence among the chimney-pots which he loves so well can be restored to him in all its serenity. In the height of his anger he may state his determination to go nowhere, perhaps; yet he will find this ultimatum inadequate to protect him from the dreaded nuisance. It will be either forgotten or disregarded; for suppose that he is sincere, and carries out his intention, by lingering lovingly until the end of August in the deserted alleys and drives of the Park, and in the sepulchral *salons* and corridors of the clubs, of a certainty he will encounter, sooner or later, one of his belated pests, who says, with an air of profound surprise, 'What, not off yet?' or if it be the beginning of September, 'What, back in town already?' In a word, everybody seems bent on impressing upon him the fact that his conduct in not going away is most extraordinary, if not reprehensible.

Let him, however, defy all these final outrages by outstaying everybody; yet, being human and fallible, he may, nevertheless, be actuated by the bell-wether instinct in him, and be tempted to creep quietly and sadly away for a week or two to some obscure locality. Supposing, I say, that he does this, what awaits him on his return? Why, a question more aggravating, perhaps, to his peculiar temperament than all others.

No sooner has he settled himself snugly down for the winter, as he tells you, and is looking forwards to a renewal of his murky pleasures, and the snug delights of the club dinner, the theatre, and the smoking-room with its bright fire and cheery talk, than

he is met again, on all hands, by 'Where have you been?' Sure as night follows day, this question now follows him wherever he goes for many weeks; he cannot escape it, and it renders October as trying a period for him as any in the year. All that can be said with regard to the aggravating nature of the first inquiry may be said with additional emphasis of the second. Moreover, it is so entirely idle and gratuitous; for, in most instances, those who put it care not one rap where he has been, any more than they did where he was going; but they go on repeating it over and over again, merely, it is to be supposed, because 'repetition is,' as George Eliot says, 'the fundamental principle of human speech.' Anyway the air is thick with it, and, like the bandilleros of the bull-ring, the Londoner's acquaintances pelt him with the little pestilent dart of a query, until, tortured beyond endurance, he becomes thoroughly furious, and, goaded to desperation, he turns savagely upon his tormentors, hurling against them mentally, at any rate, all the vials of that cynical wrath for which he is eminently distinguished. He remembers to have heard of a certain Diogenic philosopher who declared that he disliked most people, and hated the rest; but this sentiment very inadequately expresses our true Londoner's feelings. It is not half virulent enough for him. He laughs to scorn likewise that dictum laid down by another man 'deep in the knowledge of the world,' viz. that he hated all people until he knew them. 'No,' says our sufferer, in the climax of his agony, 'it is the very fact of the people being known to me which makes me object to them. My code shall run thus: relations I despise and detest; connections I hate; friends I dislike; acquaintances I tolerate; but the only people I really like are the people I don't know. These, at least, leave you in peace, and never trouble their heads as to where you are going or where you have been;' and in the fervour of his gratitude he would like to shake hands with them all round, but for the fear that the moment he had done so they might presume upon his good-nature by putting to him the dreaded question.

Without, however, carrying our resentment to these lengths, might not the question which occurred to my mind, as the sarcastic little Irish girl was warbling about the delights of home, be put with advantage by many people to themselves before they start on their annual peregrinations? Why go away at all? Is it absolutely necessary every year? and do we, as time creeps on, always look forward to the jaunt with such a vast degree of gratification as to make it indispensable to our happiness? If they answered honestly, I believe scores and scores of kindly folk would spare themselves infinite perplexity, expense, and discomfort. How many of them cannot recall, I wonder, with agonising minuteness the distress which the orthodox migration from London inflicts upon them, not only in the contemplation of it, but in its actual experience! Can you not yourself, dear sir, remember what your feelings were, say, when in an evil moment you consented to accompany Bawkins on a continental trip by the Dieppe route, on the score of economy? Did not the prospect weigh like a nightmare on you by day, as well as by night, during all the intervening time before the start? Was it not a perpetual struggle, mental and physical, to pack up and get ready? Then the

trip itself! That transit across the 'inviolate sea' was hardly the acme of social intercourse, any more than was the journey in the hot, dusty, overcrowded railway-carriage to Paris. You did not consider its other occupants quite the most agreeable people you had ever met, nor did the change of scene, language, manners, food, &c., which you were so fond of declaring to be so beneficial, entirely on the instant present themselves to you in quite the light you would fain have yourself believe you expected. The scene had changed certainly; but you were too tired and uncomfortable to observe it. The language, notwithstanding your intimate acquaintance with it, rather bothered you (you thought from the rapidity with which it was spoken). The manners were polite, but their result extortion. The food disagreed with you; but of course that was from the haste in which you had to partake of it in the buffet. Paris is a delightful city, we all know; but the weather happened to be so hot, and the hotels all so full, that your anxiety as to lodgment prevented your entering into all its gaiety *con amore*. Switzerland is a magnificent country, calculated to inspire you with noble thoughts and pure aspirations; but it is a long journey to get to it, and you recall with anything but hilarity the run right through without a break from the French capital to the Swiss one. You had all the time during it a lingering suspicion that this sort of thing is better done in England. The rate of speed is higher, every railway-car is not there filled up to its ultimate seat, and the liberty of the subject is greater. The guards, *employés*, commissionaires, in your own land understand more readily your peculiar wants, and also the general arrangements of hotel-life suit your notions of comfort better. You dislike the practice of turning your bedroom into a sitting-room, and you have come to look upon your tub as an item demanding no extraordinary efforts to obtain. Still you give no hint of these views; you go on making out that your enjoyment is rapturous, and that journeying by 'diligence,' or mountain railway up or down those zigzags, wriggling their way along the ridge of the terrific precipices, is of all things calculated to strengthen your peculiar nervous system. Yes! you will probably bear yourself nobly, and assume a demeanour of jaunty gratification and delight; but in your secret heart of hearts you will be extremely glad when it is all over, and you are back at home again safe and sound. Safe! yes, and may I repeat with emphasis sound? for it does not always follow that when you regain once more that haven of rest that you find yourself so much the better for your trip. If you happen to have been a little out of health when you went away, it does not follow that the knocking about you have had, the long journeys, broken rest, heat and fatigue generally, have turned out to be the best restoratives; in fact you will be lucky if you are not rather worse than when you started.

I need not dwell much more in detail upon these incidental experiences. They vary, of course, in degree and character, but they lead, in most cases, to similar results. As the happy father of a happy family, even the month at the English watering-place, with its crowded lodging-houses, rampaging company, nigger-minstrels, and bands, is not all bliss when you come to think about it. You

remember what the life is there, and how frightfully bored you get with it, after the exhilaration due to that first whiff of the briny has subsided. Nor, perhaps, as a bachelor, again, can you readily forget what an impostor you felt a few days after you had written to Hawkins that highly coloured account of your delight with the Arcadian simplicity of existence at Malvern or Tunbridge Wells. You know full surely that if you really appreciated, as you may have done, the relief of getting out of the stifling heat of town, into the fresh air of the hills, that it was but a fleeting joy, and that when the silence and the solitude of the country-side had fully entered into your soul, that you began to pine for 'a little more life, sir,' and that just an idea of the hum of the hive and the buzz of business would really not have been ungrateful. You wrote most eloquently on the beauties of Nature, and told poor Hawkins, though he did not believe you, that to sit and watch sunshine and shadow chasing each other over hill and dale, or 'to wander by the brook-side, or to stroll away to the mountain's brow,' and there, stretched upon some grassy knoll, lie reading 'a book for the country,' was paradisiacal. But you were reckoning without your host, or landlady, and had scarcely appreciated the extreme quietude and rudimentary character of the entertainment provided at the country inn or rural lodgings; or rather, I should say, you were reckoning without any allowance for the fact that you are a Londoner born and bred, and that as such to the manner born you cannot expect to be exempt from a disease more or less common to all mankind. The doctors call it 'nostalgia,' but you should call it simply 'home-sickness,' for there is no discredit in being subject to it; on the contrary, it bespeaks a contented, affectionate, and domestic nature. The only thing you should do, if you are wise, regarding it is not to put yourself so persistently every autumn in the way of catching it. There is no occasion for you to do so; there are plenty of opportunities for you to get all the fresh air that is necessary for your health, without your going away from your native village, in the usual acceptation of the term. London is the most salubrious city in the world (Mr. Ruskin notwithstanding), and is in a fair way of becoming one of the most beautiful, whilst its immediate environs are proverbial for their attractive character. The parks, the broad embankments, the river, will afford you a *rus in urbe* unequalled whenever the thermometer rises higher than you like it, and you have that spare time to enjoy yourself which, according to custom, you should be wasting away from home. And with this never-to-be-forgotten advantage, that whenever the normal temperature and cloudy weather of the British climate resumes its sway over the but transient bursts of tropical sun, and renders all rural scenery and matters distasteful to you, you can return to the streets and the shops —those most lasting of all delights to the true-born Cockney. If he be very young it may be, perhaps, well for him to take advantage of his freedom and enthusiasm, and 'go about a bit' when he gets his autumn vacation. Long journeys tell upon him but little then, and his business ties are probably not sufficiently important to make his absence from the desk jeopardise the stability of 'the firm.' But when he has turned middle life, when wind and limb are not what they were, and when in all likeli-

hood he has, as the sailors say, 'many anchors out' to hold him as fast to his affairs as do his inclinations and tastes to his London life,—then, as I say, he will sometimes do wisely when autumn comes round to put my question to himself, and ask, 'Why go away at all?' A *voyage autour de sa chambre*, in all likelihood, will be the sort of relaxation which will suit him best when he gets his holiday. Let him take a journey round his rooms or house, and put them to rights: his books, pictures, hobbies, whatever home-interests he has, will be benefited by a little overhauling and undivided attention, and give him lots of recreation. He was a wise man who suggested that the easiest, best, and healthiest way of travelling is to sit in an armchair and read the experiences of others; and in these days, when everybody goes everywhere, there is no lack of books, which, when we give our minds up to their perusal, will plunge us into the remotest, the wildest, or the most beautiful regions of the earth and the uttermost corners of the sea. If some of our Londoners would act a little more upon this suggestion, we might, at any rate, be spared to some extent the irritation arising from that perpetual inquiry of 'Where are you going?' as well as from its sequel, 'Where have you been?'

THE WISHING WELL AT UPWEY, NEAR WEYMOUTH.

A LONELY man, and crossed by Fortune's frowns,
Stood by the mystic well,
Whose waters quaffed to dearest wishes give
Fulfilment, so men tell.

He stooped, and to his lips the waters raised,
And wished for riches vast;
But ere he drank, a wave of memory rolled
Up from the golden past.

Again he stooped, and thought what bliss 'twould be
To lack the thousand ills
That flesh inherits; but the wish died out:
His bosom felt Love's thrills.

Once more he wavered, and the thought of life
To patriarchal age
Seemed fair; but no, 'Life without love is naught,
A blank unlovely page.

For thee, my absent love, I'll wish for thee:
Thy presence far outweighs
Those blessings which I fondly deemed so dear—
Wealth, health, and length of days.' M. J. P.

HALF-HOURS WITH SOME OLD AMBASSADORS.

III.

GONDOMAR AND THE SPANISH MARRIAGE.

WITHIN thirty years after the disastrous and futile expedition described as the 'invincible' Armada, Spain was entering into negotiations for the marriage of her Infanta to Prince Charles, heir to the British Crown. The power of England during this period greatly impressed the Spanish kings, and Philip II. and his successors devoted themselves to the task of either crippling her supremacy or sharing it with her. That which Spain failed to achieve by force of arms she nearly accomplished by diplomacy; and it would be curious to speculate on the course of British history if the Spanish marriage, which for a period of six or seven years was the most widely-discussed event in European diplomacy, had become an actual fact. Gondomar, whose name is so prominently associated with this transaction, regarded the marriage itself as a small and secondary event; but he saw in it, as he believed, the way to realise a great and magnificent dream, namely, the conversion of England to the Catholic faith. It is surprising how little is known of this extraordinary man, whose conceptions were upon a colossal scale, though he lacked the power of taking the practical intermediate steps for their realisation. If it were not for the recent valuable researches of Mr. S. R. Gardiner, this famous ambassador to the English Court would still be, to all intents and purposes, a mere *nominis umbra*. And yet, by the adroitness of his flattery and the brilliancy of his wit, he acquired almost unparalleled influence over King James I., of learned and pedantic memory.

The story connected with the Spanish marriage is one of the most interesting and romantic in our diplomatic history, and a flood of light has been thrown upon it by Gondomar's own letters, found within the last few years in the archives of Simancas. The chief actor in this drama, Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, better known by his later title of Count of Gondomar, was admirably fitted for the task he attempted to execute. 'It is true,' observes the historian already named, 'that it would be absurd to speak of Sarmiento as a man of genius, or even as a deep and far-sighted politician. He was altogether deficient in the essential element of permanent success, the power of seeing things of preeminent importance as they really are. During his long residence amongst the English people, and with his unrivalled opportunities for studying their character, he never could comprehend for a moment that English Protestantism had any deeper root than in the personal predilections of the King.' This was his cardinal and fundamental error, as he lived to discover. 'But if the idea of converting the English nation by means of a court intrigue had ever been anything more than an utter

delusion, Sarmiento would have been the man to carry it into execution; for he cherished in his heart that unbending conviction of the justice of his cause, without which nothing great can ever be accomplished. He thoroughly believed, not merely that the system of the Roman Church was true, but that it was so evidently true that no one who was not either a knave or a fool could dispute it for an instant. He believed no less thoroughly that his own sovereign was the greatest and most powerful monarch upon earth, whose friendship would be a tower of strength to such of the lesser potentates as might be willing to take refuge under his protecting care.'

The chief personal characteristics of Gondomar were his self-confidence, which amounted to the sublime, his remarkable conversational powers, and his ingenuity in paying a compliment. These qualities speedily gave him an ascendency over James; and nothing could more conclusively prove this than the incident connected with Donna Luisa de Carvajal. This Spanish lady had been imprisoned for her attempts to make perverts in London; and yet Sarmiento, of his own accord, and through his personal influence only, secured her unconditional liberation. Considering the strength of Protestant feeling in England, this was no light achievement. He pursued a deep policy in his efforts for the extension of toleration to English Catholics; and in 1614 had almost persuaded James to break with his Parliament and trust himself to the hands of Spain. But, as Mr. Gardiner observes, the ambassador aimed at something far more splendid than the alleviation of the distress of a handful of Catholics in England. He saw that a crisis for Catholicism itself was at hand, and he argued that 'if liberty of conscience, under the guarantee of England and the German Union, would disintegrate Catholicism in the South, why should not liberty of conscience, under the guarantee of Spain, disintegrate Protestantism in the North? Nor had he any doubt that England was the keystone of Protestantism.' So far Sarmiento saw truly, but he hopelessly expected to conquer English Protestantism through its King. Still, his scheme was a large one. 'If the countenance of England were withdrawn from the Protestants on the Continent, the Catholic princes would be able to resume their legitimate authority. The Dutch rebels would be compelled to submit to their lawful sovereign. The French Huguenots would be unable any longer to make head against the King of France. The German Protestants would find it impossible to resist the Emperor. Sigismund of Poland would regain the throne of Sweden, from which he had been driven by his usurping uncle, Charles IX., and his usurping cousin, Gustavus Adolphus. The restoration of Catholicism would go hand-in-hand with the cause of legitimate monarchy. Law and order would take the place of religious and political anarchy. The only remaining Protestant sovereign, the King of Denmark, it could not be doubted for an instant, would conform to the counsels and example of his brother-in-law, who before many years were past would be the Roman Catholic King of a Roman Catholic England.'

This was a gigantic conception, but everything depended upon the union with England. The two Powers together—Spain and Great Britain—might become the virtual dictators of Europe if

Sarmiento's plans were successful. From this point of view consequently, it will be seen that the idea of the marriage was of immense importance. The scheme was accordingly pushed forward, and in April 1615 James received from Digby, the British ambassador in Spain, the Spanish demands. These articles seem almost incredible now. After England had completely thrown off Roman Catholicism, James was asked to stipulate that any children that might be born of the marriage should be baptised after the Catholic ritual by a Catholic priest, that they should be educated by their mother, and that if upon coming of age they chose to adopt their mother's religion, they should be at liberty to do so, without being on that account excluded from the succession. All the servants and nurses in the Infanta's household were to be exclusively Catholic, and there was to be a public chapel or church open to all who chose to avail themselves of it. The ecclesiastics were to wear their clerical habits in the streets; and one of their number was to exercise jurisdiction over the Infanta's household. Moreover, the execution of the penal laws was to be suspended. With the exception of retaining his own Protestant convictions, the future King of England was to hand over the entire control of his children and his household to the Roman Catholics. James might well pause when he read these articles; but his hesitation was partly due to a fear that Prince Charles, supported by the King of Spain and the English Catholics, might be prevailed upon to head a rebellion against his father, and a deposed king could easily be murdered. Yet, with some modifications, he actually consented to accept the articles as a basis of negotiation.

Meanwhile, the thread of our narrative must be interrupted to glance at the episode leading to the unjust and infamous execution of Sir Walter Raleigh. Gondomar had determined to put Raleigh out of the way. This distinguished man, after escaping the consequences of one attainder, was commissioned by King James to go and explore the gold mines at Guiana. He set out from Plymouth in July 1617; but his design, being by some secret means betrayed to the Spaniards, was defeated. His eldest son Walter being killed by the Spaniards at St. Thome, the town was burned by Captain Keymis, who, being reproached by Sir Walter Raleigh for his ill-conduct in this affair, committed suicide. Gondomar upon this made heavy complaints to the King, as though the peace had been broken between England and Spain; and a proclamation was published immediately against Raleigh and his proceedings, threatening punishment in an exemplary manner. Notwithstanding this, Raleigh, who landed at Plymouth in July 1618, and heard that the Court had been turned against him by Gondomar, firmly resolved to go to London. He was arrested on his journey thither, and conveyed to the Tower, from where he ineffectually attempted to escape. It was discovered, however, that his life could not be touched for anything which had been done at Guiana; and a privy seal was sent to the judges forthwith, to order execution in consequence of his former attainder. James was undoubtedly in a great difficulty; if he pardoned Raleigh he must break with Spain; and if he sent him to the scaffold he was virtually condemning himself, since he had

given him the commission to Guiana. But the order was given for his execution, Raleigh protesting his innocence to the last. On the scaffold he behaved with cool intrepidity. Taking the axe from the executioner and running his finger down the edge, he said to himself, 'This is sharp medicine; but it is a sound cure for all diseases.' When he had laid his head upon the block, some one said that he ought to lay his face towards the east, whereupon he replied, 'What matter how the head lie so the heart be right?' In a few moments the judicial murder was completed; but James's act of submission to Spain was regarded throughout England as a national dishonour.

Gondomar's power over the King continued to grow; and in March 1620, after spending some time in Spain, the ambassador once more returned to England. In an audience he had of James, his Majesty said, 'I give you my word,' taking Gondomar's hand as he spoke, 'as a king, as a gentleman, as a Christian, and as an honest man, that I have no wish to marry my son to any one except your master's daughter, and that I desire no alliance but that of Spain.' James thought he was leading the ambassador, whereas the latter saw through, and took advantage of, his weakness and helplessness. There was one man, however, whom Gondomar could not overreach, and that was Digby, our representative at Madrid. It has been shown that if he could have had his way there would have been no Spanish match proposed, and no religious concessions to the demands of a foreign sovereign. But at Whitehall Gondomar reigned supreme. In February 1621 the King furnished evidence of being completely under the domination of his superior mind. He declared himself ready to live and die in friendship with the King of Spain; and as for the Puritans, they were the common enemies of both. He had conformed to the usage of the Catholic Church in having the service on the occasion of his reception at Westminster Abbey chanted in Latin. Gondomar, growing bolder, said he hoped to see him restored to the Church, and to the obedience of the Pope. 'If,' the King replied, 'these things could be treated without passion, it is certain that we could come to an agreement.' The whole conduct of James at this period was contemptible. Threats and blusterings were succeeded by entreaties and tears; and the Sovereign of England appeared in turns as the powerful monarch and the almost abject suppliant.

But if Gondomar was thus powerful with the King, his character was accurately gauged by the London populace. Passing down Fenchurch-street one day in his litter, an apprentice called out after him, 'There goes the devil in a dung-cart.' One of the ambassador's attendants was greatly enraged, and turned upon the offender: 'Sir, you shall see Bridewell ere long for your mirth.' The apprentice replied, 'What! shall we go to Bridewell for such a dog as thou!' and he forthwith knocked the Spaniard into the gutter. Gondomar appealed to the Lord Mayor for justice; and his lordship—much against his will—sentenced the apprentice and his offending companions to be whipped through the streets. An angry crowd gathered round the cart, who drove away the officials with violence. Resort was now had to the King; and finally the original sentence was carried out, one of the apprentices dying under the lash.

The House of Commons became

alarmed at the signs of the growing power of the Spanish ambassador, and at the favour with which the Roman Catholic religion began to be regarded; and they petitioned the King on the subject. In reference to this matter Gondomar wrote a letter to James, which, from its astounding tone, fully showed the depth of weakness to which James had fallen. He said he depended upon his Majesty's goodness to punish the seditious insolence of the House of Commons, or he would have left the kingdom already. 'This it would have been my duty to do, as you would have ceased to be a king here, and as I have no army to punish these people myself.' A quarrel ensued between the King and the Commons, which led to the latter making a formal protestation of their privileges. But on the 30th of December the King came to Whitehall, sent for the journals of the House, and, in the presence of the Council and of the judges, tore out with his own hands the obnoxious page on which the protestation was written. It was thus that James endeavoured to suppress liberty of speech; and he also now decided upon at once dissolving Parliament. This was a great triumph for Gondomar, who wrote to his own sovereign, Philip IV., as follows: 'It is certain that the King will never summon another Parliament as long as he lives; or, at least, not another composed as this one was. It is the best thing that has happened in the interests of Spain and the Catholic religion since Luther began to preach heresy a hundred years ago. The King will no longer be able to succour his son-in-law, or to hinder the advance of the Catholics. It is true that this wretched people are desperately offended against him; but they are without union amongst themselves, and have neither leaders nor strong places to lean upon.' Parliament was dissolved on the 6th of January 1622, which had nearly likewise been the last of James's reign. It appears that he was riding in Theobalds Park in the afternoon, when his horse threw him into the New River. Breaking the ice as he went in, there was 'nothing but his boots seen.' Sir Richard Young jumped in and rescued him; and being put into a warm bed, on the following day he was none the worse for his accident.

Digby returned to England from Madrid, to find the King completely in the power of the Spanish ambassador. Digby, in fact, now told James that so long as there had been any doubt of the turn which affairs might take, he had recommended that England should remain on good terms with the enemies of Spain; but he must now assure him that he would ruin himself if he did not place himself altogether in the hands of the Spanish Government. Digby was conscious that he had failed, and that Gondomar had borne away the diplomatic laurels. But the task which the latter had taken upon himself—that of converting, partly by force and partly by stratagem, all that remained of Protestantism in Europe—was hopelessly visionary and chimerical. Yet, having rendered active interference in the Palatinate impossible, he now sought to embroil England with the Republic of the Netherlands. In March Digby again went to Spain, and in an interview with the King he pressed for the Pope's answer with regard to the dispensation in the matter of the marriage treaty. Digby, however, was not quite satisfied with the answers of Philip and the Infanta, and he

requested from James positive instructions to come away at once, the moment that he was able to discover there was the slightest inclination to delay the conclusion of the treaty.

At this juncture Gondomar returned to Spain, his departure from London exciting a feeling of intense satisfaction throughout England. There never was any foreign representative so unpopular in this country, and his intrigues with the King against the people fully justified this sentiment of indignation. As a result of Gondomar's arrival, in August the Spanish Council of State decided, with regard to the question of the Palatinate, to give complete satisfaction to the King of England. James now resolved upon leaving with Philip all responsibility for the restitution of the Electorate and the Palatinate. A congregation of four cardinals examined the articles of the proposed marriage treaty between Prince Charles and the Infanta, and came to the conclusion that they were altogether insufficient. Something must be done for the general body of English Catholics; and without this it would be the duty of the Pope to refuse the dispensation. Gage was despatched to England with the altered articles; and when he had perused them, James returned his answer through Digby. He said the cardinals ought to have known that it was out of his power to concede a public church. He would bind himself to allow the children to remain under their mother's care until the age of seven, the time to be extended if it were found necessary for their health. As to the general demands on behalf of the Catholics, he had gone as far as he could in mitigating the effects of the penal laws. The treaty must therefore be considered at an end, if Spain did not accept these terms within two months. Buckingham wrote to Gondomar that they had put the ball at his feet; but in all other parts of the world the effects of the policy were not regarded with favour.

A vivid picture of Prince Charles as he appeared at this time is furnished by Mr. Gardiner. He had nearly completed his twenty-second year, and to a superficial observer was almost everything that a prince should be. Graceful and dignified in bearing, he rode better than any other man in England, and distanced all competitors in the tennis-court and tilting-yard. He had a fine ear for music, and great taste in art. He was more moderate than his companions in his attire. 'His moral conduct was irreproachable; and it was observed that he blushed like a girl whenever an immodest word was uttered in his presence. Designing women, of the class which had preyed upon his brother Henry, found it expedient to pass him by, and laid their nets for more susceptible hearts than his.' But he had grave defects. The love of truth had no lodgment in his breast, and he was uncertain in judgment and hesitating in action. He cared nothing about the proposed marriage at first, and on one occasion observed, after contemplating a portrait of the Infanta, 'Were it not for the sin, it would be well if princes could have two wives; one for reasons of State, the other to please themselves.' But he was completely under the influence of Buckingham, and with him fell in with the Spanish designs unthinkingly.

To this description of Charles we must add a companion-picture of the Infanta Maria, who had only just completed her sixteenth

year. 'Her features were not beautiful, but the sweetness of her disposition found expression in her face, and her fair complexion and delicate white hands drew forth rapturous admiration from the contrast which they presented to the olive tints of the ladies by whom she was surrounded. Her life was moulded after the best type of the devotional piety of her Church. The money which her brother allowed her to be spent in play she carefully set aside for the relief of the poor. Her character was as remarkable for its self-possession as for its gentleness. Any one who hoped to afford her amusement by repeating the scandal and gossip of the Court was soon taught, by visible tokens of her disapprobation, to avoid such subjects for the future. When she had once made up her mind where the path of duty lay, no temptation could induce her to swerve from it by a hair's breadth. Nor was her physical courage less conspicuous than her moral firmness. At a Court entertainment given at Aranjuez, a fire broke out amongst the scaffolding which supported the benches upon which the spectators were seated. In an instant the whole place was in confusion. Amongst the screaming throng the Infanta alone retained her presence of mind. Calling Olivares (the President of the Council of Ministers) to her help, that he might keep off the pressure of the crowd, she made her escape without quickening her usual pace.'

She felt a great aversion to marriage with a heretic, and this aversion was enhanced by the assurance of her confessor, that 'he who lies by your side, and who will be the father of your children, is certain to go to hell.' She remonstrated with her brother, and threatened to go into a nunnery if the marriage were forced upon her. Olivares, in great straits, fell back upon the old plan which had been favoured by Philip III., and proposed the marriage of Prince Charles with the Emperor's daughter, and a Catholic education for Frederick's eldest son at Vienna, with the prospect of the hand of an archduchess when he became of age. But this policy was unanimously declared against by the Council of State. Olivares apparently gave way, and once more the marriage negotiations were resumed. Gondomar assured Digby (now the Earl of Bristol), our representative at Madrid, that Philip was ready to give way on the question of the church in London, and that he would restrict its publicity to the household of the Infanta. But Catholic ecclesiastics who attended her, though liable to be banished, must be exempted from punishment. Endymion Porter bore these amended articles to London; and also a secret message from Gondomar, joyfully accepting the offer of a visit from the Prince. The articles were at once signed by King James and his son; as also was a document to the effect that Roman Catholics should no longer suffer persecution for their religion, and that they should be relieved from taking oaths, to which they objected on religious grounds.

In January 1623 Charles and Buckingham resolved upon undertaking the visit to Madrid which they had promised Gondomar to make before he left England. Buckingham, or 'Steenie,' as the King called him, from a fancied resemblance to a portrait of St. Stephen in his possession, held complete sway over Charles, and though obstacles were put in the

way of the proposed journey, he resolved to overcome them. James, who was in greatly shattered health, reluctantly gave his consent to the journey, and then, bursting into tears, begged them not to press him to a thing so mischievous in every way, the execution of which was sure to break his heart. Charles replied that if he were forbidden to go to Spain he would never marry at all; and Buckingham said that if the King broke his promises in this way nobody would ever believe him again. James sent for Cottington, and consulted him about the proposed expedition. Cottington discountenanced the project, whereupon the distracted monarch threw himself upon the bed, and passionately exclaimed, 'I told you this before. I am undone. I shall lose Baby Charles.' In the end, the King once more gave way. Taking time by the forelock, and in order to prevent his Majesty from yet again changing his mind, the young men at once formed their plans. Charles took leave of his father at Theobalds on the 17th of February, and then rode off with Buckingham to the Marquis's house in Essex.

The travellers passed through some extraordinary adventures. On the morning of the 18th, disguised with false beards, they started from Newhall, under the names of Tom and John Smith. Their only companion was Sir Richard Graham, Buckingham's Master of the Horse and confidential attendant. Off Gravesend they surprised the boatman by ordering him to put them ashore on the outskirts of the town, instead of at the usual place of landing. His astonishment increased when one of the party handed him a gold piece, and rode away without asking for change. Believing that they were duellists who had just arranged a hostile meeting, the boatman gave information to the magistrates, who despatched a postboy to Rochester, with orders to stop them. But Charles and Buckingham had left the city before the arrival of their pursuer. A real danger, however, soon awaited them. They had scarcely got clear of Rochester when they saw a train advancing to meet them. This proved to be the royal carriage, which was conveying the Infanta's ambassador, Boischot, under the escort of the Master of the Ceremonies and of Sir Henry Mainwaring, the Lieutenant of Dover Castle. The Prince and his companion, to avoid detection, spurred their horses over the hedge, and galloped across the fields. Mainwaring, imagining that the party might contain two of Barneveldt's sons, who had been recently concerned in an attempt to assassinate the Prince of Orange, sent a messenger back to Canterbury with orders to detain them. The situation became critical, and it was only by pulling off his beard, and assuring the mayor that he was the Lord Admiral going down to Dover to make a secret inspection of the Fleet, that Buckingham obtained leave to continue his journey. Cottington and Porter were waiting for them at Dover, and the whole party next morning put off for Boulogne.

In three days they reached Paris, where Charles saw his future wife Henrietta Maria at the rehearsal of a masque; but she does not appear to have excited in him any feeling of emotion. The news of the Prince's departure caused great concern in England, and the question was not unnaturally asked, why, if everything was still uncertain, he should risk his person, and give such an

advantage to the King of Spain, by putting himself in his hands? The courtier Williams, in writing to the Prince, openly said that the detaining of his Highness's person might serve the turn of Spain as well as the marriage, 'at least-wise for this time, and the exploits of the ensuing summer.' There was a great outcry against Buckingham, who was asserted to have been guilty of high treason in carrying the Prince out of the realm.

On the evening of the 7th of March Charles and Buckingham arrived at the Earl of Bristol's residence at Madrid. Late as their arrival was, Gondomar was made acquainted with it, and he hurried off to the Royal Palace, where he found the Minister Olivares at supper. 'What brings you here so late?' the latter inquired; 'one would think you had got the King of England in Madrid.' Unable to conceal his high gratification, Gondomar replied, 'If I have not got the King, at least I have got the Prince.' The news was almost too good to be believed, but Olivares, convinced at length, informed the King of the astounding intelligence. Both the monarch and his minister agreed that Charles would never have come to Spain if he had not made up his mind to change his religion.

Olivares was now anxious to settle the matter of the marriage at once, and he told Buckingham that it might be managed without the Pope, if, as he imagined, the journey of the Prince meant his conversion to Rome. Buckingham, however, protested against this. Charles was introduced to the King, and attempts were made for his conversion. There was so much talk about this that even the Earl of Bristol was shaken for a moment, and told Charles that there was a general belief he was about to change his religion, and declare it at Madrid. Upon this the Prince indignantly replied, 'I wonder what you have ever found in me that you should conceive I would be so base and unworthy as for a wife to change my religion!' The Prince was shortly afterwards lodged in the palace, and Gondomar was delighted at this, as it not only removed him from the sphere of Bristol's influence, but placed him more immediately under his own. The English Heir-apparent went in triumph through the streets of Madrid, the populace cheering him, and singing the song of Lope de Vega, in which was recited how Charles had come, under the guidance of love, to the Spanish sky, to see his star, Maria.

Charles seems to have been greatly impressed by the personal appearance of the Infanta. 'Without flattery,' said Buckingham, writing to King James, 'I think there is not a sweeter creature in the world. Baby Charles himself is so touched at the heart, that he confesses all he ever yet saw is nothing to her, and swears that, if he wants her, there shall be blows.' The favourite endeavoured to push forward the marriage negotiations, but Olivares made fresh demands. He asked that fortified towns should be made over to the Catholics, to be held by them in the same way that Rochelle was held by the Huguenots. Buckingham at once refused this proposition, pointing out the great difference between the circumstances of the French Huguenots and the English Catholics. Meanwhile negotiations for the Papal dispensation went forward; but the Infanta declared that unless the Prince became a Catholic she would never consent to be his wife.

An interview was now granted to the Prince with his expected bride. He found her in the Queen's apartments, seated by her Majesty's side. 'After paying his respects to the Queen, Charles turned to address his mistress. It had been intended that he should confine himself to the few words of ceremony which had been set down beforehand, but in the presence in which he was he forgot the rules of ceremony, and was beginning to declare his affection in words of his own choice. He had not got far before it was evident that there was something wrong. The bystanders began to whisper to one another. The Queen cast glances of displeasure at the daring youth; Charles hesitated, and stopped short. The Infanta herself looked seriously annoyed; and when it came to her turn to reply, some of those who were watching her expected her to show signs of displeasure. It was not so very long ago that she had been heard to declare that her only consolation was that she should die a martyr. But she had an unusual fund of self-control, and she disliked Charles too much to be in the slightest degree excited by his speeches. She uttered the few commonplace words which had been drawn up beforehand, and the interview was at an end.' The Cardinals decided to grant the dispensation, but threw the responsibility for the execution of the new articles upon Philip. Charles resisted all attempts to make him abjure his religion, and he was encouraged by his father, who wrote, 'It is an ill preparation for giving the Infanta free exercise of her religion here, to refuse it to my son there; since their religion is as odious to a number here as ours is there. And if they will not yield, my sweet baby, show yourself not to be ashamed of your profession; but go sometimes to my ambassador's house and have your service there, that God and man may see ye are not ashamed of your religion. But I hope in God this shall not need.'

Early in May 1623 the whole question of the marriage was referred to three Spanish commissioners, of whom Gondomar was the chief, who were appointed to treat with Buckingham, Bristol, Aston, and Cottington, on behalf of the Prince. Charles offered to try to induce the English Parliament to repeal the penal laws, but his offer was declined by the Council of State. At last Charles gave way on every point. He agreed that his wife should have the care of their children until they were twelve; that the oath of allegiance should be altered so as to please the Pope; that the Infanta's church should be open to the public; and that he and his father would bind themselves to the immediate suspension of the penal laws; engaging to persuade Parliament to repeal them in three years. After the acceptance of these humiliating conditions, the marriage seemed nearer than it had yet done; but the Junta of Theologians now decided that the Infanta must remain in Spain for at least a year after the celebration of the marriage. Buckingham, though furious at the news, was quite helpless to mend matters. The Prince himself, according to a story told by Howel, could neither think nor speak of anything but the Infanta. He once startled the rigid propriety of the Spanish Court by leaping into a garden in which the lady of his affections was walking. The poor girl shrieked and fled, and it was with some difficulty that Charles was per-

suaded by the supplications of her guardian to leave the place.

When the news of the dispensation reached England, James began to make preparations for the reception of his son's bride. Inigo Jones was employed to decorate Denmark House and St. James's, and the Prince's ship was as richly furnished as if it were intended to receive a goddess. Buckingham, for his share in the happy transactions, was created a duke. But shortly afterwards the King heard of the impossible conditions with which the dispensation was clogged. Then he became genuinely anxious concerning the safety of his son, and wrote to him and Buckingham to come away from Spain speedily, and give up all care for the treaty. 'Alas, I now repent me sore,' he said, 'that ever I suffered you to go away. I care for match nor nothing, so long as I may once have you in my arms again. God grant it! God grant it! God grant it! Amen, Amen, Amen! I protest ye shall be as heartily welcome as if ye had done all things ye went for, so that I may once have you in my arms again, and God bless you both, my only sweet son, and my only best sweet servant; and let me hear from you quickly with all speed, as ye love my life. And so God send you a happy and joyful meeting in the arms of your dear dad.'

The Prince of Wales bestirred himself to obtain better terms from Spain, but he was a mere tool in the hands of Olivares, who played with him in order to gain further time to strengthen his plans. On the 26th of June Sir William Croft arrived at Madrid with James's promise to agree to the articles as they stood, and with directions for his son's immediate return. Charles now imagined that all obstacles were at an end, but he was deeply chagrined when he learned the King of Spain's determination that the marriage should not take place till September, and that the Infanta should not sail for England till the following March. Charles at first determined to leave; but still temporising, he agreed to accept the articles touching religion, and the marriage was again agreed to. Madrid was now ablaze with illuminations for four successive nights, and the Infanta was spoken of as the Princess of England, and allowed to appear at the Court Theatre.

But princes and princesses discover, with humbler people, that 'there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.' James was vacillating in England, but at length he brought the whole Council to agree to sign the articles, on condition of receiving orders to do so under the great seal. The articles were signed, and the event was celebrated by a banquet. But away in Spain Charles was agreeing to yet further articles, making the marriage an absolute impossibility. He gave up everything on the score of religion as touching his expected offspring, and promised to give ear himself to Roman Catholic divines as often as the Infanta requested him to do so. He must have been madly infatuated, or he would never have so risked offending deeply the whole Protestant feeling of Great Britain. When Gondomar assured Olivares that the Prince had accepted all the religious conditions imposed, he exclaimed, 'Is it possible? I should as soon have expected my death.'

The Infanta was persuaded to yield to the marriage, on the ground that she might be the instrument for bringing back the whole of England to the bosom

of the Church, and Charles now hoped to be able to take her back with him to England. But James stood firm with regard to two concessions yet required. He would not consent to restore the forfeited rents and fines to the Catholics; nor would he agree that schools and colleges should be rendered accessible to the Roman Catholics. He observed that it would not look well 'that he should not only at one instant give unexpected grace and immunity to his subjects the Roman Catholics, but seem to endeavour to plant a seminary of other religion than he made profession of.' He also now explicitly ordered his son to return. 'I confess it is my chiefest worldly joy that ye love her; but the necessity of my affairs enforceth me to tell you that you must prefer the obedience to a father to the love ye carry a mistress.' Charles delayed his return, however, first on one plea and then another, hoping all the while that the marriage would come off. But at length, on the 29th of August, having taken the oath to the marriage contract, he took leave of the Infanta and left Madrid. The Spaniards were exceedingly glad to be rid of Buckingham, whose insolence towards themselves, and familiarity towards the Prince, offended and scandalised them greatly.

Charles's journey to England resembled a royal progress, and when he reached London the streets were thronged by enthusiastic crowds, who shouted 'Long live the Prince of Wales!' They had begun to think they should never see the Prince again. He was afterwards warmly greeted by the King, his father, at Royston. Negotiations for the marriage were still carried on, but it soon became obvious to James that there was no real basis on which to treat. The crisis came, and the projected union collapsed.

We have no hesitation now in severely blaming both James and the Prince for hoping that such a marriage could ever take place under the humiliating conditions demanded by Spain. She exacted everything and yielded nothing. It was well for this country, and well for the cause of Protestantism in Europe, that Gondomar's house of cards, constructed with so much skill, was eventually shattered. But what is perhaps most remarkable on looking back at this singular episode in British history is the fact that Charles was allowed to return to his native country. The duplicity and the bigotry of Spain were such that it is a matter of marvel she did not hold the Prince as a hostage until the marriage conditions were fulfilled. It is true she would have exposed herself to the wrath and ultimate chastisement of England, but certainly at one time she had the most important card in her own hand, had she had the courage to play it.

The moral of the projected Spanish marriage is that, as political, religious, and governing forces, Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are antagonistic to each other, and can never be brought into harmony. We therefore rejoice that the advantages so dearly purchased by this country, and which centre in the Protestant faith, were not thrown away by the consummation of a scheme which owed its origin to the wily and astute Gondomar.

ROMANTIC STORIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION:

THE MISSING MARRIAGE REGISTER.

The south coast of Devon is fringed with a number of pretty watering-places, which, until the advent of the railway, existed in a state of primitive simplicity and absolute quietude and seclusion. I have heard the story of an old gentleman who, hunted from place to place by the encroaching lines of railway, took refuge in a forlorn nook of South Devon, and that the remorseless railway came at last, and ran between his garden and the sea. The tradition goes on to say that this injured individual committed suicide. At the time when only the rumours of a railway were heard in the South Hams, as the southerly part of the county is called, and that in the somewhat mitigated form of an atmospheric railway, there were, living in a seaside cottage of a bungalow description, a widow lady and her two children, a girl and a boy. The lady's name was Adeline Roe, and it will be assumed, for the purposes of this unvarnished narrative, that her maiden name was Doe. This is a legal story, and I may as well take as names the two famous old English names which were once used as a matter of form in actions of ejectment, although the usage of the names has now disappeared. Mrs. Roe was one of the most loving and beloved of mothers. She was the most careful and conscientious of teachers. But there was one very curious circumstance about her. She was never known, in the little town and in the neighbourhood, to have spoken of her husband. Her children never heard her speak of their father. Personally they recollected nothing whatever of him. As children, they never spoke of a subject concerning which she never spoke to them. If they had ever done so there was something in the mother's manner which repelled inquiry. There were ill-natured people who, after their manner, said ill-natured things; but so gracious and kindly was the lady, so pure her life and spotless, that their ill-natured remarks fell to the ground. It was all very well to be reticent with children, who understand the doctrine and discipline of reserve. But as the children grew up, and they asked questions which it was reasonable and right they should ask, it became very difficult for her to maintain her position of absolute silence. She never volunteered any remarks, and answered as few questions as possible. She was a lady who could never tell the slightest conventional fib, or even make an evasion, without a heightened colour and hesitating voice. It was impossible that something or other should not leak out. When her daughter was married it became necessary that she should give the name and occupation of the girl's father. On the marriage register the name of the bride's father was stated as Richard Roe, Captain R.N. Now it so happened that there had been a famous sailor of the name of Roe in the generation before,

who had obtained a great naval victory off Cape Finisterre, and who had been elevated to a peerage with an estate in consequence; and it became an object of curiosity to the Roes to know if they were in any way related to the famous Earl.

But the gentle lady died, and made no sign. The son had long ago entered the navy, probably because, from early life, he had been brought up near the sea and the shipping, and perhaps, also, because it was in the blood, a transmitted inherited tendency. The son grew up to manhood and even declined towards old age during his mother's lifetime; but the mother never told her secret. He became a distinguished sailor himself, of whom his country had just reason to be proud. The mystery of his birth had ceased to be spoken of; but it was a mystery which often brooded upon his mind. In the course of the many years of his intercourse with his mother in her country home there were several remarks of hers which he mentally pieced together into a coherent whole, and which were sufficient to furnish him with a working hypothesis for the solution of this problem. He had also been led by the similarity of name to inquire into the history of the famous Earl, and besides the public documents, which became a portion of the historical knowledge of the epoch, circumstances arose which told him much of the private history of the great man. He had accidentally made friends with the Earl's nearest representatives. He had been enabled to view some private letters of his, which were preserved in the archives of a great library. He was startled by the similarity of the Earl's handwriting to his own. Standing beneath the great Earl's portrait, the decided likeness that existed between himself and the portrait greatly impressed the friends who were present and traced the similarity. Being permitted to read these letters, and having various conversations with persons who knew much of the Earl's family history, he found that in a curious way that history dovetailed with his own. To say the truth, the great sea-captain had been something of a martinet. He was an unmarried man, but he had two nephews, to the elder or the survivor of whom his title and estates would descend. They were entailed by law, and the Earl could not withhold the inheritance, though he might curtail or abrogate an allowance. Anyhow, he seemed to rule over the young men with an absolute domination. The old Earl appeared to have been an absolute woman-hater. This was the more unfortunate, as the tastes of the nephew were altogether in the other direction. There was evidence that he was very much attached to a young lady of the name of Adeline, and also that the Earl did not approve of any such attachment. But the career of this elder nephew was prematurely cut off. Seventeen years before the great Admiral died himself, Captain Roe lost his footing in a boat while in harbour, and was drowned. It was a curious fact that the death of this Captain Roe at sea harmonised exactly with the date of the death of the Captain Roe whom, since his sister's wedding-day, he had regarded as his father. Upon his mother's death he had made a careful examination of all her letters, diaries, and relics, and found that all communications from her husband had ceased about that date. There were only two other Roes in the service, and by an exhaustive process—visiting them at their

homes and inquiring into their history—he had been able to eliminate them altogether from the range of possibilities. Of course the fact that his mother had given the name of Captain Roe, R.N., as his father would not, if uncorroborated, prove the fact to the world, but to his own mind it brought ample conviction. Still there were two facts which completely staggered the honest simple mind of the Admiral. If the young captain had really married his mother, when were they married, and where was the certificate of their marriage? Again, on what possible hypothesis could he explain why his mother, in every way so devoted and unselfish a mother, should allow the title and inheritance to lapse from her son, and allow so many weary years to go by without completely clearing that good name which is always so dear to a woman's heart? Moreover the Admiral was troubled by a vision of wicked lords and simple maidens, and he thought that perhaps his mother had during many years in her cottage home sought to remove a bitter memory of confiding trust and miserable deceit.

Had the Admiral been gifted with the constructive powers of a modern novelist, he would have found no difficulty in elaborating a theory which would satisfactorily have solved all the difficulties of the case. It was quite possible that her husband had married her, leaving her in total ignorance of his real rank and expectations. It was quite possible that, in fear of his uncle's resentment, he had exacted a solemn promise from her that she would never divulge the secret of her marriage. Very probably, having never been absolved from that promise, she considered that it was still binding upon her. The sudden unexpected death broke off all ties with the family to which she had allied herself, and which appeared, according to her husband's own showing, to look so coldly and shunningly on the marriage. She had a little property of her own, which had subsequently been increased by an opportune legacy; and being a woman of high independent spirit she resolved to hold aloof from the family, which, even in her husband's case, had not treated her with any excess of generosity. Of course it is not possible to solve completely the secret of that long and extraordinary silence. In all probability, however, it was in some such reasons that might be guessed, or in a combination of them, that the secret of the silence might be found. The mystery of his mother's marriage was one on which the Admiral often dwelt; but he dwelt upon it in a dreamy speculative way rather than with any view to practical results. To his mind there was little halo of romance in the story; it was only a bit of doubtful family history, which it would be desirable to clear up once and for ever, and then let alone again. If a vision of something splendid at times loomed across the Admiral's hazy vision, the vision was connected with prolonged litigation and interminable expenses. And so, although the Admiral made every inquiry, and gathered and put together every bit of evidence that he could collect, he rather played with the subject than went thoroughly into it; and conscious perhaps that he had not done all that he might have done before he died, he put the evidence he possessed into the hands of his son, and begged him to do justice to the memory of his own mother and the gracious silver-haired lady whom the grandson just remembered.

That son was a clergyman, living an almost idyllic life in one of the sweetest and most remote of English counties. Happy amid the woods and streams of his rural parish, with the rosiest of children and most loved and loving of wives, it was little, indeed, that he asked or wished for from the world. It was not likely that any alteration of condition would really add to their happiness; and he had sense enough to know that any alteration would hardly add to his own happiness. But he had received the legacy of a sacred trust, which he must discharge in loving gratitude to the dead; and he had also a duty to discharge to the children who would come after him. He took the most simple and direct way, which, strangely enough, the Admiral had persistently neglected to take. He took his case, with all its proofs and wants of proofs, to a legal firm of the very highest standing. The lawyers went carefully into the matter. They found, and their opinion was sustained by the judgment of counsel who were really very learned in the law, that Captain Roe, R.N., was the nephew and the heir to the title and estate of the great Earl of Finisterre. The identity was established by a great variety of indisputable testimony, which left the fact altogether unimpeachable. But then came the difficulty of proving the marriage. There was no moral doubt on the subject, as the young clergyman justly argued; but, alas, there was a great deal of legal doubt. In fact, while the evidence of identity was absolutely overwhelming, there was a total absence of any kind of evidence, direct or indirect, to prove the alleged fact of the marriage. It is hardly necessary to say that a Committee of the House of Lords would require most rigorous proof of such a marriage. There was one thing, and one thing only, which could establish the marriage beyond any possibility of cavil. The theory of a Scotch marriage, with all its presumptions and uncertainty, was not to be thought of, unless facts pointed irresistibly that way. And there were no such facts in existence. A good, downright, old-fashioned parish register was what was imperatively wanted. The longer they looked at matters, the more was the necessity apparent. In fact it was perfectly clear that the whole case entirely hinged on the discovery of such a register. If such a register was discovered, the claim to the peerage would possess an irresistible strength. If such a marriage-register could not be discovered, the whole claim would infallibly collapse.

'It must have happened in something like this way,' said William Roe. 'He must have been staying with some people, or taken lodgings, in a quiet out-of-the-way neighbourhood, or she may have been staying with friends in such a neighbourhood. That would have given them the amount of legal residence which would entitle them to banns or license. Then they would get married as quietly as possible, and he would leave his wife in the same, or in some similar, quiet spot, while he went on his sea-cruises. I must say I think it dreadfully unfair to the wife.'

'I think it so very selfish,' said the good wife, 'for people under any circumstances to make clandestine marriages. I daresay that when your poor grandfather was drowned, his widow continued for months and months without knowing that she was a widow. And then there is a misconstruction and want of charity during life; and after death there comes all

this uncertainty and heart-burning and litigation. It is all very fine and romantic to get married secretly; but I think there is nothing like the good old-fashioned way—to have your banns published on three following Sundays, a wedding-breakfast for your friends, and a wedding for all the world.'

'You have not read Aristotle, my love,' answered her husband; 'but Aristotle, who as a rule is very much opposed to expense and profusion, thinks that on an occasion like a marriage there ought to be a display. Such a display insures a publicity which ought always to be associated with marriage, and prevents such an awful amount of future fuss as that in which we shall be living for some time to come.'

'Truth is stranger than fiction,' said the lady. 'I have not had any novel from Mudie's all this summer which is really so sensational as this bit of our own family history.'

'It is very strange, and history is strange. I often think of the great day of the fight off Cape Finisterre, where my great-grandfather stood to his guns through the smoke of battle from sunrise to sunset, and little thought that he was earning peerage and pension for himself and his descendants.'

'I suppose, William, that penny papers and the Radical members think that peerages and pensions for great services in war are very wrong?'

'That is quite a mistake, wifie. The State lays out no public money to greater profit. What would the services be if they offered no great prizes? Shall every great lawyer, and, indeed, every tradesman, have a chance of fortune, and no such chance be given to the soldier and sailor, who make law and trade possible for us? There is no profession that has such few prizes as that of arms. They should be given ungrudgingly and in ampler proportions.'

And then the conversation drifted away from generals to particulars. Such a splendid chance could not exist without exciting some hopes and fears. A historic peerage is a great thing, and even if disendowed it is still a great thing, and the nation at large will always desire it to retain its lustre and its associations.

And now the whole matter became centred on the discovery of the marriage register. Even an entry in an old family Bible is not to be despised. In fact, lawyers have a very good opinion of an old family Bible as a bit of evidence. A tombstone is a good article of legal furniture. But a regular marriage entry, with names of bride and bridegroom and clergyman and attesting witnesses, is best of all. It was impossible not to believe that there had been a proper marriage. Everybody who knew Adeline must have been assured of that. Her descendants, to whom her name was little more than a tradition, felt sure of that. And as there was a marriage, so necessarily there must be somewhere a registration of the marriage. There must be an attempt to find that entry amid the millions of entries that exist throughout the country.

It is hardly necessary to say that recourse was had to the second column of the *Times*. One more addition was made to that mysterious medley of advertisements, which has added so greatly to the social puzzles of Christendom. But though the advertisement appealed to all the world, it was not so certain that it would get into the hands of the parish parsons and parish clerks, who constitute that particular portion of

the world to whom the advertisement was addressed. As a rule the parish clerk goes in for a penny paper, and the British parson is not always able to afford the luxury of the lordly *Times*.

'You had better try the *Ecclesiastical Gazette*,' said the shrewd lawyer, the head of the firm whom Mr. Roe was employing. 'Every parson reads the *Ecclesiastical Gazette*. It is sent gratis to them all; and the parsons have got into the habit of reading it right through to the last word, advertisements and all.'

'Not half a bad idea,' said Roe.

'There is a science in advertising,' continued the lawyer, 'which even advertisers do not often understand. In advertising there must be one of two things to attract attention. Either your advertisement must be continuous, or nearly continuous, and in that case the newspaper reader becomes accustomed to it, and takes it up into his mental system; or the advertisement itself must be so striking that it arrests the attention and makes an impression on the imagination.'

'Just so.'

'Well, if you offer a very large reward for a very small article—a true extract from a parish register—I have no doubt but you will set hundreds of eyes at work. Five hundred pounds for five minutes' writing, after hours of search which might be done by any one under direction, would not be a bad morning's work for any parson in the land.'

So an advertisement was inserted in the *Ecclesiastical Gazette*, offering five hundred pounds for the discovery of the marriage of Richard Roe and Adeline Doe.

Our story now shifts to the time of that tremendous snowstorm which happened last winter.

Nowhere had it been more severe than in the region of the southern downs. The whole range of the southern downs, from Beachy Head for seventy miles westwards, was covered deeply by the snows. The snow filled the clefts and hollows, and the drifts lay many feet deep about the paths and the ways in the little villages which nestle closely together beneath the hills. On such a day each parish became absolutely isolated, and almost each house in each parish. In the parish of Southmoor a path had been scraped from the vicarage to the lych-gate, and from the lych-gate to the western porch, or the Galilee, to speak with ecclesiological accuracy, and also to the vestry. To the mind of the worthy Vicar of Southmoor the state of the fabric of the church had occasioned considerable anxiety. The days of church-rates are numbered, and churches can no longer be kept in repair by compulsory payments. Neither was it a rich neighbourhood, in which any sums which were wanted might be easily raised among good church-people. That heavy mass of superincumbent snow gave the Rev. Decimus Moxon serious apprehensions. He had reason to believe that one of the pinnacles of the tower was shaky; and although the roof of the church might be sound—for it was built in the glorious old days when church-builders built with a single-hearted view to the solidarity of their work—yet the comparatively modern addition of a vestry on the western side had unequivocally showed signs of dilapidation, and had, indeed, elicited serious remarks from the Archdeacon on the occasion of his recent visit of inspection. As the snow had been falling all one day and all the next night and all the next

day, Mr. Moxon seriously wondered, as he took his candle and went up-stairs to bed, how far the sacred edifice would be able to withstand the unexpected and frightful stress. The memory of the oldest inhabitant would hardly furnish the record of such another storm. As soon as the boys of the school had 'cast up straight paths,' being incited thereto by previous experiences of halfpence and warm drinks, the Rev. the Incumbent, accompanied by the faithful clerk, proceeded to count up the damages, and think how things might best be repaired. As they faced the cold wind and the flakes still falling, though not much in quality, one might think of Cowper's lines on the last smouldering sparks in the dying embers:

> 'There goes the parson, O illustrious spark,
> And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk!'

The fancy occurred to the Rev. Mrs. Moxon, as she watched her large-sized husband bending before the blast. She, good lady, had to take into account the serious want and deprivation that might arise in the parish on account of this unparalleled snow-storm. She thought piteously, too, of the sheep that might be perishing in the hollows of the downs. Certainly a good many of the poor would be thrown out of work, and there would be great scope for firing, blankets, and tea in the cottages. And then there were the thoughts of the Christmas accounts, which it was now time to settle; and though they would all be settled, things were a little tight, as in so many English homes in these hard times, and a little more ease in income would be desirable.

When the parson arrived in the vestry, he was obliged to admit that some of his worst apprehensions would probably be realised. For he distinctly recognised in the vestry roof a hole that admitted daylight, and through this hole, drip, drip, drip, had come the descending snow of the last seventy-two hours. The Vicar wondered if his farmers would subscribe the money to repair the roof, and to how much the cost would amount. He had a very good idea of the mounting qualities of builders' bills. Then also the snow had fallen on a most aggravating spot. The box containing the old parish registers was exactly beneath the dilapidated portion of the roof. The box was securely padlocked; but, alas, there was a large hole, and a hole that threatened constantly to grow larger, in the lid of the box. If any one had taken a measuring line, with the purpose prepense of inserting one end in the hole of the roof and the other end in the hole of the lid of the box, the matter could not have been adjusted with greater exactness. The Vicar was a man who prided himself on the order, neatness, and safety of his registers, and the knowledge that a stream of snow had fallen into this highly venerated box was a circumstance which filled him with regret and annoyance.

'This will never do, Jones,' said the Vicar, in a remorseful way. 'There has been more damage done here within the last few days than in the whole of the century. We must inspect matters carefully, overhaul damages, and see what is best to be done.'

The key of the chest was promptly produced, and the precious books were taken out, to be wiped, examined, and cared for by the judicious Vicar. There they lay before him—the three volumes which constituted the

epitome of the life and the successive generations of the hamlet—the books of the marriages, deaths, and baptisms. One or two of these were good hide-bound volumes, which had successfully resisted the inroads of the elements. This, however, was not the case with the register of marriages, which was found to be very damp and considerably discoloured. Indeed, real mischief was done to the part of the book immediately underneath the two holes. Fortunately the unused part of the book lay uppermost, and here, if there had been any writing, it must have been spoilt and rendered undecipherable. Even when the written part was arrived at, the dampness had penetrated and here and there blurred the writing. The Vicar laid the book upon the vestry table and eagerly scrutinised it. As he went backwards page after page with minute care, he was glad to see that the discolouration grew less and less, and the entries gradually assumed their normal appearance. There is something in looking over a parish register which is indescribably interesting to a parish clergyman. There is poor old Jem Murton whom he buried the other day. If the parish is a small one, it is not so many pages backward till you come to Jem Murton's wedding, nor so many pages backward still till you come to the humble chronicle of his birth. The Vicar looks at the signature of the officiating ministers. There were only three within the century. The last man had been vicar for forty years, and the man before him for forty-five. Our present Vicar was a man who, as his parishioners said, 'enjoyed bad health.' It was much to be wished that he really could enjoy it. He grimly speculated whether his own final entry would belong to the next year or two, or whether he would, in that bracing air, emulate their longevity.

But while his eye wandered over the register, he met with an entry that puzzled him exceedingly. It was familiar, and at the same time it was unfamiliar. The names were not names that he associated with the parish. And yet they were names which held a distinct place of their own in his recollection. It was the register of the marriage of Richard Roe and Adeline Doe. There was no mistaking the fine and familiar Roman hand of the officiating clergyman. The names of the witnesses were familiar to him. They had, of course, long gone to their rest; but their children and grandchildren were still in the parish, and could attest the handwriting. This was the register, beyond all dispute, which was advertised in the *Ecclesiastical Gazette*, and which—comfortable thought!—would bring a reward of five hundred pounds to the lucky discoverer.

'The case is virtually concluded,' said the great lawyer as he grasped his friend's hand. 'I salute you at once as Lord Viscount Finisterre.'

But I very much question whether my lord and lady were better pleased with their peerage than were the worthy Moxons with the five hundred pounds yielded by the old parish register.

OUR PICNIC ON THE MENDIPS.

The weather was charming. A cloudless sky, a brilliant sun, and the month that in which the trees are in fuller and more luxuriant foliage than at any other period of the year. Certainly the temperature *was* slightly too high for comfort, more especially when walking and hill-climbing. But, nevertheless, 'the upper ten' of a Somersetshire village came to the decision that a picnic, with the sun at 80° in the shade, and at a spot matchless for its command of magnificent views, but powerfully suggestive of sunstroke, being entirely destitute of shade unless you were to poke your head into a gorse-bush, was *the* thing of all others to be desired.

Now the vicar and the squire of the parish being business-like practical men, all requisite arrangements were promptly and systematically made, the day and hour fixed, Barton Rocks selected as the spot, the commissariat department committed to competent managers, and a list of guests to be invited drawn out.

The day arrived, bringing with it an increased intensity of temperature. The slight breezes that had been so refreshing throughout the previous week had dropped. The air seemed in motion, so rarefied was it by the intense heat; but all said it was just the weather for a picnic, at the same time carefully disguising within their own breasts the dire and boding misgivings with which they contemplated a walk of two miles, to be succeeded by a climb up the rocks, which certainly, in some places, were not many degrees out of the perpendicular. Such of the picnickers as were the proud possessors of carriage or of saddle-horse went by a more circuitous and practicable route. I was amongst the pedestrians. We started a very merry party, considering the almost vertical rays of the sun; but we all pronounced it 'delightful,' and passed our handkerchiefs over our faces with unwonted frequency. The two miles on the flat were traversed with tolerable comfort; a halt was then called, and we rested a while to recruit before tackling the clamber up the ascent. Then came 'the tug of war.' The turf was short, crisp, and slippery, starred over with the dwarf circular thistle so familiar to all lovers of the common objects of the country. These thistles, however fair to look upon when, bathed in dew, they bask in the genial glow of a bright summer morning, assume a widely different aspect from another point of view, when the dewdrops have fainted and faded into nothingness under the ardent rays of the sun. Their prickles, always aggressive, have been strengthened and refreshed by the grateful draught of the previous night, and stiffen themselves out with redoubled penetrative power. When, therefore, the thermometer indicates 80° in the shade, in their ubiquity and capabilities for annoyance they become objects to be looked out for, and to be marked and shunned by the thin-skinned wayfarer. The minute but lancet-like

points inflict stings of a nature so peculiar as to be only adequately compared with the probable results of a well-meaning but ill-advised attempt to caress a healthy porcupine of abnormally developed quills. We were destined to become personally acquainted with their irritant attributes by practical experience.

The younger and more thoughtless of the party proposed a move, and we started. All exclaimed how much easier it was than we had thought, and how much better than that long tiring walk, with its eternal white glare, clouds of dust, &c.

Thus we interchanged congratulations; but gradually the observations became fewer and further between, given out in gasps and puffs, like the wind escaping from a church organ. Yet still, struggling gamely, we laughed hysterically, saying, 'How gipsy-like! Don't you think so, now?'

Eccentric sounds, hard to be expressed in letters—a something between a sob, a sigh, and a groan—began to be audible. In consideration, perhaps, for these, I, with some others who were in advance, looked back, and entertained ourselves with a critical observation of the rest of the party, arduously employed in disentangling themselves from the close embraces of the blackberry 'runners,' postponing the extraction of sundry thorns until a more convenient season and a theatre of operation more suitable.

Some circumspection was requisite in the upward journey, since ever and anon an obnoxious boulder, encountered unawares, sent the too careless climber staggering back some distance, the hands, in the case of a fall—and such were neither few nor far between—grasping recklessly the first come-at-able holdfast, while the body slided, not precisely on its back, until such times as the groping feet were brought up by rock, or root, or bush. At last, having reached the top, we forecomers gratefully sank down to rest, casting the while pitying glances on the unfortunates still toiling excelsior-wards. Of course as *this* was not one of your every-day picnics, but rather intended to be something more refined—a kind of *al fresco* banquet, indeed—the ladies' toilettes were somewhat more elaborate, their 'get-up' (to use a vulgar phrase) was more artistic, than is usual on such occasions. That all had, more or less, suffered in the climb was easily apparent as each reached the rendezvous. More especially was it perceivable in the matter of headdresses. Alas for the false hair! Some, hanging suspended by the friendly elastic to the base of the skull, jumped spasmodically up and down at each step forward of the fair owner. Others had emigrated to the side of the head, hat or bonnet sympathetically immigrating in obedience to that law of Nature which abhors a vacuum. One nymph appeared on a rocky ledge, dishevelled as to her silky locks, and hatless, her piquant head-covering bowling merrily yards adown the slopes and away below!

And now the walking contingent of our party was assembled, nothing loth to 'rest and be thankful.' For a while no sound broke the silence but sighs—not altogether 'whispers on the breeze'—honest pantings, and stertorous breathings closely approximating to snorts from some of the gentlemen who had not studied Banting. Presently, exhausted nature being somewhat recruited, there were movements hither and thither, the ladies breaking off in little coteries; the gentlemen, as is *en*

règle at the commencement of all festivities, in hall or on lawn, 'hung fire,' remaining 'remote, unfriended, solitary, slow.' The convenient gorse-clumps were extemporised into screens and dressing-rooms, wherein such 'wise virgins' as had brought needles and thread with them were being piteously implored to render help to the 'foolish' ones. It must be borne in mind that shade there was none from bush or bower or tree, the gorse seldom rising a yard from the soil; but a low boundary wall, rudely constructed of flat stones laid at haphazard, ran in a serpentine direction for a long distance, affording, in some sort, a screen wherewith to fend off the glaring sunbeams.

With our backs against the wall, our bodies forming the two sides of a triangle, we sat in a long row, every eye strained to the point where the riding party was expected to appear. At length we were gladdened by the sight of a horse's head appearing above the crest of the hill, and anon a wagonette full of a merry party, without thorns or lacerations or dishevelments, and (to the ire of the *fair* pedestrians) with unruffled toilettes, drove gaily up. A phaeton succeeded, which, in its turn, was followed by a pony-chaise, a dog-cart, a 'sociable,' and a couple of open flies. These various conveyances were flanked by a sprinkling of equestrians. Last, but decidedly not least, arrived the much desiderated commissariat cart, quieting by its advent the anxious cares of many, whilst administering a fillip to their impatience to be 'up and at' its toothsome freight.

Of course every tongue was loosed; of course every one (the ladies more especially) talked at once, 'eagerly and loud;' of course no one paid the least attention to what his neighbour had to say, being for the nonce bent on the burden of his own theme. A slight acerbity, the offspring of sun and hill and thorn, might possibly have been detected in the tone and manner of the walking party; but as no one seemed a whit the worse for this, it did not perhaps so much matter. A spot, verdant, level, in every way favourable, was selected for the ordering of the luncheon, and the feast was promptly spread. Hampers were disembowelled; a delicious claret-cup, on whose incarnadined surface floated refreshingly the thrice-welcome blocks of ice, was concocted *secundum artem;* and 'all the delicacies of the season' (within reach and *means*) presently strewed the turf.

Youthful spirits became yet more buoyant at the pleasant vision, and grave faces relaxed somewhat of their quondam severity. Old General P. assumed the post of commanding officer, and having summoned us to the parade-ground, proceeded to call the roll, to see if his whole force was duly mustered.

All 'told off' but one; the absentee being the Vicar of ——, a bachelor divine, and the coveted alike of the wise and the foolish virgins, by whom his temporary absence was now mourned and his coming eagerly looked for.

The feast was spread, the grace was not said, and all the jaws (and tongues) wagged merrily. Presently, in the far distance, was descried a prancing steed spurning the turf with flying hoof. Every one at once recognised the well-mounted clerical laggard. His appearance left nothing to wish for, and a sigh of relief from many a gentle spinster's bosom confessed, 'Better late than never.'

It occurred to more than one of the gentlemen that the Vicar

was riding rather faster than he might quite have wished; they therefore stood at attention, carefully scanning the horse and its rider as they came bounding towards their bourn. The ladies assumed fresh attitudes and poses yet more graceful, as they lounged nymph-like on the emerald sward.

Now the gay cavalier, who was witching our little world on the hill 'with his noble horsemanship,' was not (for how *could* he be?) altogether in the dark as to the tender and unflagging interest taken in his every word and deed by his fair neighbours; neither was he so unskilled in the ways of women as to be ignorant that they dressed at him, smiled (not *laughed*) at him, talked at him; even, I fear, were more frequent church-goers at him. Our reverend knight was a good horseman—for a parson—and, naturally wishing to improve the occasion, he proposed within himself to make his *début* with *éclat;* so, riding with loose rein, hand low, and toes daintily balanced in the stirrups, he came 'sailing o'er the mead.' But *dis aliter visum:* the strain of Arab blood in the little mare's veins was all afire with the rapidity of her course; and as she smelt the fragrant turf that gave and sprang under her small hoofs, she tossed her head in wild glee, and came to the conclusion that the curb was a bore, and the bore was not to be borne. She thought upon her sires—free as air in the desert—and, spurning control, dashed forward, clearing the low stone wall like an antelope, when the totally unexpected apparition of a large white cloth spread upon the turf brought her up suddenly with so abrupt a jerk, that the clerkly exquisite, describing a parabola over her blood-like head, descended—well, certainly *not* upon his feet. He *sat* on the soft turf, and gazed around on the encircling sympathetic faces as gazes one awakening from a perplexing dream. The ladies were ravished with despair, refusing to be consoled; the brutes of men were merely politely concerned.

Assuming the perpendicular with an agility that was extremely reassuring, the Vicar replied good-humouredly to the numerous and varied inquiries as to whether he was hurt, shaken, frightened, &c. The rider being safe and sound, the steed next claimed attention. She had stood perfectly quiet, regarding the proceedings with a lazy air of utter indifference; but now, as her master advanced with persuasive, loving, coaxing voice and outstretched hand, she receded, backing step by step.

To his endearing epithets she replied with a toss of her head; his futile endeavours to grasp the bridle were frustrated with a malicious celerity. 'Twas all in vain that he essayed to lure her with a luscious apple; for once the fruit had lost its mystic spell over the female eye and mind, and the dainty mare merely sidled towards a flock of southdowns, who were coming inquisitively forward in battle array. Some of the party now thought it time to offer themselves as coöperators in the endeavour to recapture this pretty rebel.

I omit a few trifling details, and go on to say that after inspecting the southdowns the exhilarated steed started off at a brisk trot; 'the trot became a gallop soon,' and a regular chase began.

Of course all the gentlemen joined in it *con amore;* two or three coachmen and grooms and several dogs lent their sweet voices to swell the hunting-chorus, and

there was presently a goodly running and racing on the lone hillsides.

To those who know anything of the geography of the Mendips, the difficulties of such a chase over such a country will immediately suggest themselves; but for the benefit of such who are ignorant of the locality and its characteristic features I will sketch it in brief.

This particular point, then, the halting-place (and proposed banqueting-scene) of the party, was a plateau of about three-quarters of a mile in circumference; beyond, for a long distance, the 'lay of the land' was alternately steep ascent and deep decline, dell, valley, and ravine, until, arriving at Crook's Peak (the highest point of the Mendips), a sharp descent takes you into the village of L——. Kindly picture to yourselves, O discriminating readers, this pleasant tramping-ground so admirably adapted for pedestrian achievement! The furze-bushes here and there and everywhere; or where they were *not*, their places were ably filled by huge blocks and masses of stone, fretted and pierced into such grotesque and weird shapes by the action of water ages ago, that it seemed a very Golgotha replete with the petrified remains of antediluvian monsters. Heading towards this latter point gaily scampered the light-hearted horse at 'a long slow gallop, which, it was evident, could tire' the hunter's zeal and her master's ire; thus ran the noble steed 'far from the madding crowd,' who panted vainly in the rear. The little mare evidently intended taking Crook's Peak *en route;* it occurred, therefore, to several wily ones, in the plenitude of their sagacity, to strive to arrive there first by a slightly different line; but, to their chagrin and disgust, the capricious equine beauty altered her mind, and, bounding like an antelope over stick, stock, and stone, clearing gorse-clump and boulder alike, went thundering down the steep incline, and presented herself to the amazed view of the sorely perturbed dwellers in L——. The slopes above, dotted here and there with runners, stumblers, tumblers, rollers, and sliders, presented an appearance at once novel and remarkable, and the wonder waxed and the perplexity grew in L—— thereat. Clatter, clatter dashed the runaway through the little hamlet; helter-skelter, yet not exactly at her heels, ran and perspired the pursuing picnickers; that is, at least, such of them as, being males, were in condition. Labourers, small boys, yelling yelping curs, each and all joined the chase, with ponderous tread and uncouth shout, and 'the hunt was up' with a vengeance. The report circulated anon that an evil-doer had stolen a horse; therefore, with laudable promptitude, the local constabulary turned out to a man, I might say to *the* man, as 'the force' consisted of a single fat jolly functionary, who could not run, indeed, but gesticulated with ten police-power vehemence, and brandished his staff, threatening the utmost rigours of the law. After a fine uninterrupted run of nearly two hours, the light-heeled steed was captured in a lane which had no outlet; and the puffing, panting, exhausted runners began the return march to the deserted damsels and sympathising spinsterhood and the more ancient gentlemen on the picnic-hill. As the weary cavalcade, all toil- and travel-stained, wound round a point of the heights, they came in sight of the anxious watchers; white handkerchiefs and fair

hands yet whiter were waved, and voices, sweet and otherwise, were raised in acclaims of welcome.

A general strategic movement on the banqueting-ground now commenced. Alas, the necessity of leaving a responsible person in charge had never occurred to any one; in consequence the harrowing spectacle that met the (literally) ravished gaze of the hungry and expectant throng was as cruelly disappointing as it was disagreeably surprising. The southdowns before mentioned being of an inquiring turn of mind, and encountering no let or hindrance, indulged their reasonable desire to investigate the nature of the feast. After picking their way daintily through the labyrinth of dishes, their natural proclivities asserted themselves with respect to the fresh crisp salad, a tempting morsel to the ovine palate; furthermore, the apples, &c., overcame any lingering restraints of sheepish self-denial. They were joined anon by their stanch guards, a couple of sheep-dogs, who, immediately falling-to, pronounced the viands excellent in snarls and growls, as they fared sumptuously on beef, ham, tongue, and fowl. A brace of jackdaws regaled themselves on a delicious cream. A weary donkey reclined lazily on the ices, and munched at a dish of luscious apricots at his leisure. A flock of small birds, supplemented by a flying cloud of wasps, bees, ants, &c., were each and all hard at it, laying in a store of victualment against a rainy day; when a piercing shriek from the advance guard of ladies announced the dire catastrophe to the despoiled picnickians. To dislodge the unmannerly and uninvited feasters was the first step, and great was the stampede that ensued thereupon. The birds and insects simply fled and left no sign; but the donkey, the dogs, and the sheep wrought sore havoc all around, leaving in their retreat the delicacies, so carefully prepared, now massed and merged one in the other, pounding them with their hoofs amongst the smashed china and broken glass. The 'thistle-eater' rose calmly: placing a hoof neatly in a bowl of lobster-salad (the only thing left intact), he crushed it to atoms, then moved serenely away. With one accord the disappointed ones lifted up their voices in loud and bitter lamentation, as they stood around the erst toothsome, but now mangled and repulsive, baked meats. Nothing could be done, though much could be, and was, said. The winded and straggling hunters of the horse were closely nearing the scene of bereavement, and of refreshment was there none; saving only a couple of bottles of claret and a demi-loaf of stale bread, all the rest were 'have beens.' Who shall describe (I am sure *I* cannot) the blank misery and hopeless despair that overspread the faces of the famishing and sorely-aggrieved stern chasers of the steed? Reproaches, remonstrances, recriminations, moans, groans, sighs, and eloquent indications of smothered indignation concurred to make such a Babel as has, I take it, but seldom been heard at any similar festivity. The thoroughly dispirited master of the horse threw himself on the turf in mute despair. In a trice he found himself surrounded by a deputation of the agricultural interest of the adjacent district. These zealous bucolics stood, hat in hand, before the recumbent divine, and each in turn, pulling at a fore-lock of damp hair, panted out, 'An' plase, sir, it wor me what corte 'er.' It is just within the bounds of possibility that a pugilistic exhibition might have

been added to the other entertainments of the day, had not the reverend victim, in sheer desperation, plunged his hands frantically into his pockets, and literally hurled all the money he had about him at his rustic tormentors, who rolled over and over each other in the scramble that ensued, and then betook themselves straightway to recruit exhausted nature at the nearest village alehouse.

One lady of energetic disposition flew to concoct an invigorating claret-cup (or the next best thing to it), and, with several gushingly sympathetic assistants, presented the grateful beverage to the long-suffering cavaliers in such few glasses as had happily escaped the general wreck. It was quaffed eagerly, nay greedily, when, to the amazement and dismay of the attendant Hebes, the partakers of the seductive potion, their hands pressed closely over their mouths, made for the dwarf-wall with one consent, over which they, as it were, prostrated themselves, and forthwith such sounds were distinctly audible as meet the distressed ear on board a vessel outward bound in a ground-swell. The fair concoctress of the cheering cup, in her eagerness and laudable desire to administer a soothing drink, had qualified the same with *salt* in mistake for powdered sugar, and the usual effects of a useful emetic manifested themselves with surprising promptitude. This was the finishing stroke; this alone was wanted fittingly to consummate the untoward events of that luckless day.

Dreadfully hungry, savagely irritable, exhausted in body, sore vexed in mind, an ardent sun above, gloom with and around us, the cup of disappointed hope was full to the brim. Preparations *nem. con.* were forthwith actively commenced for a return march.

The long procession dragged its sad length towards W——. Few words were spoken. Each took brief and downcast farewell of his or her fellow, and straightway made for home, sweet home. The ill-starred picnic to Barton Rocks was never again mentioned.

MAB.

A TALE OF A LOTTERY-TICKET.

Pausilipo is a suburb of Naples, stretching along the western side of the beautiful bay, about which so much has been said and written. Along the steep banks that descend abruptly to the sea are many charming villas facing directly on the water, and reached from the main road by zigzag paths, through gardens rich in all the luxuriant growth of Southern Italy. With the deep-blue water washing the rocks upon which these houses stand, and beyond—the sea; the mountains behind Sorrento, Castellamare, and Vico standing out in bold outline; with Vesuvius rearing his head solemn and threatening to the left—there is here to be found about as fine a view as the heart of man could desire. And when the eye, as it is apt to do, tires of these grander beauties, it is only necessary to turn round to regale one's senses with the soft greens of the fig-tree, olive, chestnut, and lemon, the odours of the orange-blossoms and roses, and the varied hues of the many flowers with which Nature supplies this land with so liberal a hand.

In one of the prettiest of these villas lived an English family; and at the time of the present story some tender passages were taking place between the eldest daughter of the house and Lord Ardley, whose yacht was in harbour at Santa Lucia, whence it was his frequent custom to sail across in the dingey when the wind was favourable, both as a short cut, and to avoid the dust, jolting, and evil odours along the Chiaja. The usual companion of these journeys was a lad of eighteen, an Englishman, who, some few years previously, had been cast adrift at Naples by one of those strange chances which are liable to befall a young sailor who finds himself with a brutal captain and a drunken crew. After many shifts and much misery, by dint of sheer honesty and industry—virtues at a considerable premium in this city—and aided by a quick intelligence, he had acquired a fair knowledge of the language, and a decent position as guide, courier, or commissionaire, as occasion offered. His name was Frank Lloyd. Lord Ardley had taken a fancy to him, and attached him to his special service during his stay in the neighbourhood, finding him both useful and discreet.

Now it happened that adjoining the Villa Santangelo was an untenanted house, placed under the care of a gardener, named Baldelli, who occupied a small house close to the water's edge, which served for bathing apartments when the main building was tenanted. With old Baldelli lived his niece Teresina, an exceptionally beautiful girl of fifteen, who had rather a hard time of it to make things comfortable for her surly and avaricious uncle, to whom the expenditure of every soldo for household necessities was an agony. Teresina was a great favourite at the villa, where she was often required to assist the ladies with her needle; and there some of her happiest days were spent, much indeed to her own advantage; for, taking

an interest in her, they had taught her habits and modes of life which raised her considerably above her countrywomen of the same class. Deprived early of her parents, she mixed little in the society of her own class; for Baldelli was strongly averse to anything in the nature of outings or junketings, as involving expense, and his miserly habits made him unpopular amongst his neighbours.

Teresina had been for some time attached to Frank Lloyd, much to the displeasure of old Baldelli, who hated him very cordially for the way in which Lloyd steadily set his face against the monstrous impositions attempted by the old man, though he frequently put little commissions in his way for flowers, fruits, poultry, and the rest. Baldelli's son, Luigi, was also a thorn in the sides of the lovers. He was a typical specimen of 'those Neapolitans,' a term of contempt used specifically for a loafing set in Naples by the surrounding towns. Just a shade above the lazzaroni, who are fast disappearing, they are as idle and worthless a set of cubs as are to be found in Europe. Work is hateful to them; they would sooner filch a shilling than earn ten any day; their time is spent round the doors of cafés, in the piazzas, on board the bay steamers, in the gardens of the Chiaja; always in gangs, gambling, idling, smoking, singing, sometimes—but rarely—fighting, never working. Where they find means to dress their unclean bodies in the tawdry pseudo-respectable clothes they wear, and for the lavish display of collars and cuffs—the less said about their under attire the better—is a mystery. Luigi had graduated highly in this set; but, having a notion to settle down into a less precarious mode of life, had thought that Teresina might prove a useful appanage, and, perhaps, by her cleverness and industry, supply him with means for his own particular pleasures.

Affairs thus stood when a stroke of fortune, which befell Teresina, gave rise to the trouble of which this story tells. Like many wiser and better people than herself, she occasionally dreamed dreams, and often threw away her small savings in the public lotteries upon some 'lucky number' which was to make her fortune. One day, however, she found herself to be the one in a thousand on whom Fortune smiles. She was the winner of five hundred pounds. It is needless to say with what alacrity she presented herself at the *banco di lotto*, and her disappointment on finding it was impossible to pay the money over to her. She was too young. She must bring her parents or guardian. With a heavy heart she returned to Pausilipo, no longer thinking of the joyful surprise she had in store for her darling Frank, when she should place the money in his hands and tell him to take her with it; but with a presentiment of some misfortune that must arise from her uncle's greed or her cousin's envy. But she had been taught a courage and independence from her association with the English which determined her to make a stand for her rights.

'Chut! What do you do so late?' growled her uncle as she entered the house.

'I have been to the *banco di lotto*, my father.'

'Lotto! what have you to do with lotto? O little devil! it is not enough that you should beggar me by giving macaroni to any blind beggar who passes, but you must play lotto, eh? while Luigi sleeps all day, and drinks anisette like a prince! Curse you both!'

'But I have gained, my father.

And it was not with your money, but some that I earned from the English ladies.'

'Gained! Humph! Nine or ten lira for your trenta centesimi, I suppose?'

'I have won twelve thousand five hundred francs.'

Old Baldelli dropped his hands to his side, fell back in his chair, and, with open mouth and staring eyes, seemed to have lost all power of utterance.

'It is true, uncle Baldelli; and you are glad of my fortune, are you not?'

'Twelve thousand! Why, we shall be rich, my little Teresina. But where is the money? Let me look at it, let me feel it;' and his lean fingers trembled with excitement.

'I have not yet received it. They said you must apply for it. But here is the ticket.'

Old Baldelli seemed lost in thought.

'Yes, yes; I will apply for it,' he said; 'and then what gay doings shall we have! And you shall have the brightest silk scarf in Naples, and a silver necklet worth forty francs, if I can't get it cheaper. And when you marry Luigi—'

'But I am not going to marry Luigi.'

'Ah, but that will all come in time. And we will buy the little orchard on the hill above, and your old uncle—your loving kind old uncle—shall do all the work, and Luigi shall play at *moro* and go to the theatre, and the little Teresina shall look after the house and be as extravagant as she pleases.' And the old man chuckled over this pleasant arrangement. But Teresina's spirit rose at this.

'I will never marry Luigi, uncle Baldelli, for I have plighted myself to Frank Lloyd.'

Her uncle looked black at this; but any care about his niece's marriage was, at present, absorbed in thoughts about the money. He saw no connection between the two at the time. He took it for granted that what was hers was his, and if she would not have Luigi—well, it was very desirable, certainly, but Luigi must look to himself.

'And you will take five thousand francs for yourself uncle; for, although my father, I believe, left you sufficient for my support, I would not appear ungrateful. For the rest, I wish it to be given to my future husband.'

Baldelli stopped in the middle of some calculations he was making, looked fixedly for a few moments at his niece, and over his face came a look that frightened her.

'Bah, little fool, you know not what you say! Will you sacrifice your family to this accursed fair-faced foreigner?'

'The foreigner loves me. My family's kindness is but small.'

At this moment a servant from the Villa Santangelo appeared to request Teresina's presence at the house.

'Say no word of this to the English people,' was her uncle's injunction as she left.

'I will say no word, but I will do as I have said;' and there was a determination in her voice and look that there was no mistaking.

Baldelli sat for a long time, never moving but to make a gesture of anger, or to utter an oath. Presently he went to a cupboard, took from it a bottle of wine that had laid there many a month, and drank it at a draught. And then, as the unaccustomed fumes mounted to his brain—for he rarely took stimulants—he paced the chamber to and fro, excited and restless.

It was late when Teresina returned, and it was with surprise she found herself accosted by her uncle in amiable tones.

'You have said nothing at the villa of your fortune, child?'

'Nothing, my father.'

'And you will not marry that poor Luigi, and you will give all this money to the Englishman?'

'It is only just, uncle Baldelli.'

'And your poor uncle will remain in Pausilipo, and work, work for his little plate of macaroni, and his dear little Teresina will be quite proud, and ashamed of him!' and there was a sneer in the old man's tones, and a dark look in his eyes, that belied the softness of his speech.

'No, no,' replied his niece, 'never that, I hope. But you will go about this for me to-morrow, will you not?'

'Yes, I will see to it. And now we will take a cup of wine in honour of my Teresina's good fortune. See here, it is ready;' and he took from a side table two tumblers already poured out.

'Ah, this is very kind of you, my father. But how bitter it is!'

'Finish it, finish it,' he said fiercely; 'a bumper to the lucky number!' and she, not caring to irritate him, complied.

She shortly after retired to rest, drowsy and tired.

Half an hour afterwards the old man crept towards her room, muttering,

'*La Sonnambula, La Sonnambula!* Luigi said that the opera at San Carlo was like real life. Somnambulists do strange things.'

And he passed into her room.

Frank Lloyd was sitting in a boat waiting for his employer at the steps of the Villa Santangelo. He was surprised to see a light burning in the gardener's house at so late an hour; but he knew that Teresina often sat up late after her uncle had retired; indeed, he had had many a sweet stolen interview with her at the window, when waiting as he waited now. At this moment he heard the voice of Lord Ardley, joining in a duet with his *fiancée* at the villa. 'He won't come away just yet,' said the sailor to himself; so, taking a clean jump over a strip of water that separated the two basements, he clambered up to the gardener's window. He had placed his hands on the window-sill, and was drawing himself up, and about to give the usual signal, when, to his intense astonishment, he saw old Baldelli staggering from the opposite room, half dragging, half carrying his niece. What could it mean? Was she ill? Was it fresh air she required? He had not much time for thought, for the window, opened suddenly outwards by Baldelli, struck his hands from their hold, and he had only time to drop lightly into the water beneath. As he came to the surface —great Heaven! he could neither shout nor prevent it—the slight form of his sweetheart was hurled from the window into the black water below; and the old man, not daring to look upon his handiwork, closed the window abruptly and disappeared. It was the work of a moment for the young sailor to reach the body of his sweetheart, and to place her in his boat under cover of a sail. But what was he now to do with his precious burden, which lay, safe but still unconscious, near him? He might indeed place her under the care of the ladies at the villa; but then he feared the chatter of servants, nor did he know what power her uncle might have to claim her from them, for Italian courts are slow to recognise the interference of foreigners in domestic difficulties. While still in doubt he was joined by Lord Ardley, to whom he related his adventure. The nobleman listened to the agitated voice of the poor lad, and, making

FRANK'S SURPRISE.

See 'A Tale of a Lottery Ticket.'

a shrewd guess at their relations, he said,

'Your sweetheart, eh, Lloyd?'

'Yes, sir; not a doubt of it.'

'And you're going to marry her?'

'Now more than ever, sir. Ah, my lord, you don't know what difficulties we've had to fight against, nor yet how dear she is to me;' and then he told the whole story of his attachment as they rowed vigorously, each at an oar, towards Santa Lucia, where Teresina was placed on board the yacht.

On the following day Baldelli, haggard and anxious, at an early hour, presented himself at the *banco di lotto*.

'I have come, as the guardian of my niece Teresina, to claim the money she has gained in the lottery.'

'Very good, signore. And first the ticket, if you please.'

He eagerly presented it.

'All right and in order,' said the clerk. 'She presented herself here yesterday?'

'She did.'

The clerk took out a large roll of notes, which he began deliberately and without haste to count.

'What a stroke of fortune for one so young!'

Baldelli nodded his head impatiently.

The clerk tied up the bundle of notes, and began to whistle 'Addio! mia bella Napoli.'

'Well, well,' said the gardener sharply. 'Am I to wait much longer?'

'But, signore, you seem to be in a greater hurry than the signorina.'

'What do you mean?'

'Why, we wait the arrival of Teresina Baldelli, of course' ('Stupid old imbecile!' muttered the clerk to himself).

Baldelli looked aghast, and then blustered out,

'Don't I tell you she has told me to get the money? Have you not got the ticket? What more do you want? Am I not her guardian? Do you doubt that?'

'Not for a moment; but this money will be paid in her presence alone.'

'But how can she come here? She is ill. The excitement was too much for her.'

'Ah, then we must wait until she has recovered.'

'But this is too much! Am I not a respectable citizen? Am I not—'

'*Basta!* That will do, signore;' and the clerk replaced the notes in his desk.

Old Baldelli fumed and swore, whined and entreated, with no effect.

'Give me back the ticket, then. I will report you to your superiors!'

'The ticket! Certainly. Here it is!'

And then the gardener left the office.

The clerk had seen a good number of strange things in his time, and was given to the observation of the countenances and emotions of his fellow-men; so he wrote a note to the chief office, where in due time Baldelli presented himself. And the official at this place was altogether polite and amiable, and much regretted that it was against the rules to comply with Baldelli's request; but if the signorina was unable to attend, but still anxious for the settlement of her claim, why, he would accompany the gardener himself to the house for the purpose. To which the gardener objected strongly, and retired with a face so worn and anxious and frightened, that this amiable official thought it as well to send a detective officer to look

after the old man, and, if possible, to get to the bottom of the mystery—for queer things often happen with these lotteries.

The result was that nobody had seen or heard anything of Teresina, and old Baldelli was unable to account for her disappearance, and maintained a dogged silence on the subject, for the disappointment to his hopes and the consciousness of guilt had completely unnerved him. All the circumstances were so suspicious, that the police felt justified in connecting him with her disappearance, and accordingly he was brought before the head of the police to answer for himself.

In the mean time Teresina, having recovered consciousness, was gradually brought to by the assistance of the stewardess. On being questioned by Lord Ardley, she gave a truthful account of the events of the previous night, but said that, from the time she retired to her room, her mind was a complete blank. She related with some blushing and hesitation her conversation with her uncle about the lottery-ticket, not forgetting his unaccustomed liberality in giving her wine to drink to her good luck.

'Pretty clear, my lord, I think—drugged,' said Lloyd.

'Very likely. Horrid old villain! But what's to be done now?'

'With your permission, sir, I will go into Naples and see what is going on.'

'By all means, Lloyd. And look here, I am going to be married in a few days, and if Teresina doesn't wish to return to this pleasant home of hers, I've no doubt she will make an excellent attendant on Lady Ardley in our coming cruise about the Greek islands.'

'Many, many thanks, my lord.'

On going ashore, Lloyd learned that old Baldelli had been interrogated, with the result that he now suggested the possibility of her having drowned herself; that she occasionally walked in her sleep; that he had found her door and the window open on the morrow of her disappearance. This was contrary to his statement at the office, nor could the body be found in the tideless water. He refused to say anything further, and was sent to gaol to await his trial on suspicion.

Lloyd readily obtained permission to see him.

The old man, filled with rage and remorse, cried to him to 'Begone!' but dare not look in his face.

'Assassin, I know all!'

Baldelli cowered in a corner, and said nothing.

'I know all, and I almost hesitate to relieve your villanous mind from the terror that agitates it. Under God's hand, but through no fault of yours, she lives.'

'Lives!' and his whole aspect changed. 'Then why am I here? Curse their meddling! Who says I murdered her? And you, fair-faced fool, what do you bluster here for?'

'Gently, gently, old man. There is such a thing as attempt to murder, for which a considerable term at the galleys is not infrequently given. Teresina lives, and, so far as the crime of murder is concerned, you are not guilty, by an accident. Now I mean to make terms with you. Listen: I witnessed your dastardly attempt, and I saved her life. She will not return to you; she will become my wife; she will bid you farewell, and will not be told of your wickedness; and she will carry out her intention for your benefit, and give you the five thousand francs she promised you, though

you more richly deserve five years at the galleys. If you consent to this, good. If you refuse, I at once proclaim you to be the attempted murderer of your niece.'

'*Maladetto!* May every evil—'

'Enough. You are no fool, though a great rascal.'

The programme was carried out in its entirety. Baldelli was released on the appearance of Teresina, who, alive to some rascality on the part of her uncle, was satisfied to receive from him a scowling assent to her marriage with Frank Lloyd.

After some months in the Mediterranean with Lady Ardley, she went to England, her future home, as Mrs. Lloyd; and it was not till after the old man's death that she learned the true story of the tragical event that might have followed on her lucky hit at *lotto*.

F. N.

OFF!

August is here again;
Break we the galling chain,
Cease from Law's tangled skein
Vainly unravelling.
Farewell to fog and shower,
Farewell to faces sour;
Once more the welcome hour
Striketh for travelling.

Now to outstrip dull Care,
Wandering here or there,
Anywhere, anywhere,
Gaily and idly.
No one but we alone
Guesses how rich we're grown;
Europe is all our own,
Spread the map widely!

And while the tourist hosts
Stretch forth, like Virgil's ghost,
Hands to the farther coasts,
Eager for flitting,
Haply we'll cast our lot
Where foes or friends are not,
On some untrodden spot
Artfully hitting.

Say, shall we wander through
France, passing southward to
Strands which the darkly blue
Water caresses?
Where real sunbeams throw
Wealth on the hills below,
Where the thick clusters grow
Black for the presses?

Onward to Naples' shore,
Strewn with the wrecks of yore,
There with old buried lore
Filling our craniums;
Delving for arm or bust
Eaten with mould and rust,
Sifting Pompeii's dust
And Herculaneum's.

Or at the close of day
Cleaving our silent way
Stretched in a gondola,
Best sport aquatic,
Past church and palace glide,
Won from thy conquered tide,
Won by thy fairy bride,
Fierce Adriatic!

Where the sheer crag and ice,
Snow-peak and precipice,
Guarding the edelweis,
Challenge your daring,
Skywards you'll crawl and grope,
I (through a telescope)
Feats of the axe and rope
Recklessly sharing.

Now when the winds and deep
Seem to be fast asleep,
Rare is the luck to creep
Qualmlessly over.
Write not to say 'perhaps;'
Look out your rugs and wraps,
Make up your mind and traps,
Meet me at Dover.

C. H. W.

TWO PEEPS INTO SPAIN.

A SHORT time ago I made an expedition that went through the entire southern line of the French coast. I started from its most westerly point on the Atlantic and went to the most easterly point on the Mediterranean. I left the railway for excursions into the valleys and far up amid the mountains. There is no such barrier between nations as a mountain range; and the range of the Pyrenees is one of the most effective of such barriers. It was impossible to be in France without a desire to climb the heights and to advance into the glorious land beyond. Truly says the poet,

> 'All experience is an arch where through
> Gleams the untravelled future.'

All travelling from France into Spain must necessarily be over the mountains, unless we take the eastern or the western sea, and travel by rail along the coast. My first peep into Spain, of which I shall speak presently, was attained this way, by a run from Bordeaux to St. Sebastian, and thence beyond. The other railway line, only lately quite finished, and an extremely fine one, runs from Narbonne to Port Bou, and from there to Cerbère, La Gerona, whence we go on to Barcelona, Madrid, and wherever you like. I climbed to the roof of Narbonne Cathedral, straining the eye to the line of sea and the Spanish frontier. But instead of going onwards, it was settled by the fates that I should proceed from the Pyrenees to revisit Switzerland, which at least gave me the opportunity of comparing two very different orders of mountain scenery. But while travelling through the Pyrenees again and again, one comes to the 'ports,' or passes, through which we may gain 'peeps into Spain.' Some of these are well-recognised thoroughfares, some are mountain paths for pedestrians and muleteers, and many others seem to be almost exclusively appropriated to the use of smugglers. There is an idea that some of these passes are not safe, and I have known men providing themselves with revolvers, under the impression that they would fall in with banditti. I believe that there is no such danger; and if we come to the use of the revolver, I expect that the bandit would be much more alert than the tourist, and that the first suspicious movement would bring an unhesitating shot. The Civil Guards of Spain have cleared the high-roads from robbers; and an excellent rule of theirs, to shoot down the offender taken red-handed, has produced very salutary results.

Let me recall some tantalising half-peeps which I got, even if they are entitled to be called half-peeps. I stayed at Cauterets; and, indeed, I have good reason to remember Cauterets. It is not so sweetly simple now as when the Laureate visited it, or as when he recalled his recollections three-and-thirty years afterwards. It had its nightly balls, its opera company, its daily paper devoted to sensational stories and fashion-

able small-talk. Here Queen Marguerite, one of the most respectable and quiet of Protestants and princesses, wrote the wild discreditable *Heptameron*. The favourite walk at Cauterets was to the Pont d'Espagne. It is a walk, or climb, of about two hours. It is only a pine-log bridge thrown over a deep chasm just above the junction of the streams. Like most visitors, after going a little way up the pass I retraced my steps and took the other path to the Lac de Gaube. Had I persevered and taken the Col or Port de Marcodaon, I should have reached the Spanish baths of Panticosa by a peculiarly desolate and rugged journey. Very few and very weary are those who effect it. There is nothing but a sawmill or two to break the monotony of the long day's journey. It is felt that if smugglers are capable of such meritorious industry in traversing such steep forbidding ways, it would be a great shame to quarrel with them for their devotion to the doctrines of Free-trade. Those who do not actually go into Spain should ascend the Pass for the sake of the magnificent view that is there obtained of the Spanish mountains. The view of the Lac de Gaube is much more easily attained, and is very impressive. It draws off many visitors who otherwise would take an opportunity of getting a Spanish peep. It is a wild lonely path, popularly supposed to be extremely Norwegian in character, as the track lies through a forest of black firs or pines, on one side with granite cliffs shooting up in spires and pinnacles, and on the other hand are the descending waters of the lake, which gather into mighty cascades. I remember well that on the day when I made this expedition a heavy mist overhung the path, and nothing was visible save the margin of this mountain sheet of water. I went into the little inn to console myself with some of the magnificent trout caught in the lake. Suddenly the mist lifted; the sun shone down and illuminated the whole expanse of the mountain lake or tarn. It lighted on the white marble monument of the young Englishman and his wife who were drowned here during their wedding-tour. It lighted up the snowy Vignemale mount whose glaciers feed the lake that feeds the Gave. I said that I had reason to remember Cauterets. I drove back with some friends from Cauterets to Argelez. It was very, very late at night, and very dark. Many of my readers will remember how precipitous is the road—granite rocks on one side and a sheer descent into the river on the other. Presently the carriage smashed into the rock; it might just as readily have been precipitated into the stream. The truth was soon found out. The driver was hopelessly drunk. One of our party, well skilled in horse-flesh, walked by the side of the horses for the whole of the descent to Pierrefitte. From there to Argelez it is all level ground. But our driver kept persistently smashing into every vehicle he encountered. At last all the party got out except myself, and thought it best to go on foot to their destination for fear of accidents. I was so tired that I preferred to take the risk of a collision, and I was very thankful to get on without the risk being realised. My *compagnon de voyage* generously paid the man, only righteously withholding his *pourboire*. I am not certain that in the interests of travellers generally we ought not to have had the rascal prosecuted. We hear a great deal of the com-

parative sobriety of the Continent, but a drunkenness of this kind, which endangered four human lives, struck me as being a good deal worse than a great deal of aimless and miscellaneous intoxication in an English town. These new-found friends were of that kindly sort whom we sometimes meet in our travels. They helped me while wandering over the mountains by a lift in their carriage, and perhaps still more by the brightness and pleasantness of their talk.

Once more I had one of those tantalising half-peeps. It was at gay, bright, festive Luchon, never brighter than on the days I was staying there, with the splendid new casino freshly opened. Riding-parties are all the rage at Luchon, and all riders come in, Jehu-like, cracking their whips furiously. It must be said for Luchon that it is better off in the matter of excursions than all other places besides. No doubt that to the Port de Venasque is the finest of all. The fashionable visitors to Luchon go as far as the Hospice. This is a seven miles journey of gradual ascent. It is a lovely road, for a great part cut through a forest that clothes the mountain's side; you pass through a continued trellis of lights and shadows thrown by the trees. Carriages stop at the Hospice, but you can continue your journey on mules. The old Hospice is now fitted up as an inn. It has quite divested itself of any former character it may have had for hospitality. Having liberally recruited myself, I proposed to rest for a time on a couch. The people at the Hospice were quite willing, but I was given to understand that I should have to pay an unheard-of number of francs for the accommodation. I did not care to submit to imposition; and crossing the little stream, I wrapped myself in my light overcoat, and had one of the softest of slumbers.

If you persevere up this pass you come to the lake region, if a series of tarns may be so called. There are few real lakes in the Pyrenees; they are not often larger than the tarns or the smallest lakes in Westmoreland. This Puerto must be a kind of paradise for smugglers. There is so little traffic that neither the French nor Spanish Government thinks it worth while to keep up any kind of *douane*. In the Spanish towns any young man who has done some smuggling in the Pyrenees is regarded as a sort of hero. Here you hear the doleful story of the nine tinkers who perished in the snowdrift while traversing the pass in the winter. While staying at the jolly little inn at Gavarnie, unquestionably the most central head-quarters for travellers in the Pyrenees, we have at least two routes over into Spain. This is the more remarkable, because as you gaze at the enormous wall of the Cirque no path at all is visible to the naked eye. *Murray* says that there is not the slightest danger in making the ascent, but he adds the information that if you make a false step you will be dashed to the bottom. A few hours' climbing will bring you to the narrow ridge whence you look into Spain. If you choose to climb this ridge you may stand with your heel over France and your toe over Spain. Descending to the Spanish side at Veulo, you come to an old mansion belonging to a contessa, who is willing to harbour travellers, but otherwise you must be content with such accommodation as you can find in the fondas, ventas, and posadas.

My two peeps into Spain were quite exhaustive of the ways of getting by land into Spain from France. You can pass the fron-

tier at the extreme east or west by rail. Here Spain is open to the incursions of her ruthless enemy, the French; who, whether by force or guile, by treaty or the sword, by the legions of a Napoleon or the craft of a Guizot, have always been covetously eager to annex Spanish territory. To a considerable extent they have been successful on the eastern side. There a great deal of territory which is politically French, is geographically Spanish. But on the western side the Spanish have maintained their lines, aided by the English, as set forth both by Froissart and by Napier. And if ever the Spaniards have lost heavily by land and sea—their navies destroyed, and their treasures captured—it is when they have sided with the French, their natural enemies, against the English, their natural allies. A few general notes, mainly drawn from personal experience, may assist tourists who for the first time are going to try one or both of these routes, the rail or the mountain passes. Of course the *opus operandi* is altogether different. In the railway you may travel a little slowly, a little expensively; but you will find civility, good fare, companionship, and may carry with you as much luggage as you please. But in crossing the mountains you must bring your luggage to the very smallest dimensions, unless you intend to employ one, two, or three mules. You may retrace your steps to the point of departure for your *impedimenta*, or send them round by rail to the Spanish city whither you are travelling. We are crossing the Pyrenees, and we will now suppose that we have got on the Spanish side. There may be some sort of landmark—a stream, a conical range, a wall of stone. You are not quite certain that you have come to the highest part until you have passed the watershed, and you observe that the streams are running down-hill in the contrary direction. You are in the heart of the tumbled hills. You feel that this is indeed solitude. The air is pure and bracing; but there is something weird and mysterious in its whispers. On that enormous crag opposite, you observe two immense eagles, rock-like, on the rock, and hardly separable from it in their quiescence. You never saw eagles like those in the Zoological Gardens of London and Paris. If you had an accident where you are—broke a leg, for instance—you might lie on the ground till those eagles picked out your eyes for you. There are very few Spaniards who attain to the vast altitude where you are standing. You need not wander very far away to be in regions which human foot has never traversed. By multitudes of indications you feel that you have arrived in a different country. The sierras are wilder and more jagged than on the other side. Instead of the abundant fountains springing forth, cold as ice, there are only the thin warm tricklings from the rock. The catholic sun shines down with terrific force. The sky is of a perfectly unclouded azure. You descend rapidly; and if at times you mount, you rise to descend again. If you are a naturalist, you discover many rare plants and flowers which you may identify in Mr. Packe's valuable monograph, next valuable to M. Johanne's big book on the Pyrenees. Perhaps the cattle have been driven up to the mountain pastures, and you pass through the great herds of horses and cattle. Then the ground becomes wet and porous, and you notice that faint springs are welling up; and then there is a defined water-

course, and the watercourse becomes a river. As you go farther towards the south you will encounter rivers without bridges; and not only that, but also bridges without rivers.

My own expedition over the mountains led me to the renowned baths of Panticosa. I once took in preference the steep mule path that led to the Lac de Gaube. I had heard, however, so much of the extraordinary character of this Spanish bathing-place that I planned to visit it. The highest mountains and the most splendid views of the Pyrenees are on the Spanish side; but unfortunately they have the worst roads and the poorest accommodation. My starting-point was from Eaux Chaudes; and there is a fine road through magnificent scenery up the rocky defile of the Gave. It was a sharp ascent all the way to Gabon by the Gave, and afterwards by the Brousset, to the foot of the Col d'Ancou. Then the road ceased, and the sheer ascent commenced. We left the regular mule-path to take the proverbial short cut, which generally demands more in endurance than is saved in time. It was very interesting to look back upon the point of departure, where the carriage-road came to an end. The carriages had come to a stop, the passengers had descended, and the luggage was taken down. Presently a long train of muleteers might be seen slowly winding along the pass, the mules in some instances sustaining the weight of immense boxes. Then my friend and myself were left alone in the vast loneliness of the central Pyrenees. I had been warned of the danger of the frontier region between France and Spain. I had especially been warned to be on my guard against bears and banditti. Indeed, a friend who had been doing the same journey a week previous came into my room and displayed a loaded six-chambered revolver, with which he was determined to defend his life and property against all marauders. I am bound, however, to say that the only robbers I met were the keepers of a few scattered posadas, who, only occasionally meeting with a tourist, naturally think it their duty to bleed him to the uttermost. A veritable bandit could hardly be worse.

The passage of the Col separating France from Spain calls for no special remark. There is a vast stretch of lovely country, without any of those villages and châlets that would be numerously met with in an Alpine country. When we had descended to the banks of Gallego, we had to continue our journey first to the town, and then to the baths of Panticosa, nearly 8000 feet above the sea. In France there would have been good roads; but in Spain there was nothing but a narrow mule-path for seven or eight miles, a pathway so steep and narrow that it was a wonder how any mule could contrive to get along; and at another point it was simply a rocky staircase. The poor beast would at times have to stand with its forefeet on one rock and its hind legs on another, with a rocky wall on one side and a sheer precipice on the other. From Panticosa, however, to the baths of Panticosa, there is a wonderful road of many zig-zags—an example of what Spanish engineering can effect when properly aroused; which, however, is very rarely the case. At Panticosa we found a diligence, that did the journey to the baths in the midst of a tremendous thunderstorm. The lurid lightnings revealed immense mountains with huge

patches of snow, impending rocks of granite, and a raving torrent. We reached the baths in darkness and a thick rain.

Of the numerous watering-places that one knows, Panticosa is in various points of view the most remarkable. There are some six hundred visitors, but we were the only English. Indeed, I soon had a practical proof of the comparative insignificance of my native country. I wanted change for a five-pound note, and all the officials of the establishment sat in solemn judgment upon it. They examined it with much curiosity as a work of art, and without disrespect; then politely informed me that if it had been a note of the Bank of France, they would have been happy to oblige me, but this was a document which they had never seen or heard of before. The place was crowded with Spaniards, who have a most intense belief in the virtue of the waters; and when we consider that the place is very many miles away from the nearest point of the Spanish railway system, and that it lies, so to speak, up in cloudland, a rocky basin, with a little lake in front, just beneath the very crests of the hills, and thousands of the poorest manage to get there annually, there must be boundless faith in their efficacy. Even the waters that stream from the rocks seem strongly impregnated with mineral matter; that of the lake only seemed drinkable. The springs have very significant names—*Del Estomago, Del Purganti, Del Higado* (the liver). The most painfully interesting feature of all is the number of persons in the extreme stage of consumption who come to these waters. I had never before seen the inhaling system tried on such a complete scale, although I had been very much struck with what I had heard of the curative effect of the waters of Eaux Bonnes. I could not distinguish the *pulverizacion* from the *inhalacion*, but suppose that one is treatment by inhalation and the other by spray. In each case a number of persons were seated almost in a circle, vigorously inhaling the mineralised stream through a somewhat complicated apparatus. The process occupied a long time, and the patients read their letters and newspapers meanwhile. I had never seen such a group of death-stricken men as in the *pulverizacion* chamber. The change of scene, the mountain air, the pleasant society, the hope of better days, might do much; but it was very difficult to see how the mineral waters could give any one a pair of new lungs, or indeed have any specific virtue in such cases. The place looked like an assemblage of half a dozen monasteries, being in reality hotels and huge boarding-houses, all the property of a single individual, although I believe he has turned it into a company. The more cheerful element is represented by a building which might serve for a ladies' club—a beautiful salon, and adjoining it billiard- and card-rooms. The cloaks of the men and the mantillas of the ladies are very picturesque, and every Spaniard considers himself a born gentleman, reminding us of the whole army that was knighted by Maria Theresa. The tariff for meals and lodgings was clearly indicated, and was very fair and reasonable. The entire place was in striking contrast with the little Spanish villages, in which dirt and loveliness seem almost convertible terms. I really very much wish that English doctors would take up the whole subject of the curative effect of the Pyrenean waters. I

know there are London doctors who send patients to Eaux Bonnes; but it appeared to me that the baths of Panticosa were still more remarkable. I did not find it necessary to take either guide or horse, though strongly urged to do both; I found the expenses moderate, the food excellent, and the little mountain-tour most pleasant and healthy. So rich in mineral waters are so many parts of the Pyrenees, that you have in many regions only to dig deep enough, and you come to a warm spring of great power. It is popularly stated that there are two hundred such fountains in the Pyrenees, but the number might be indefinitely extended.

I now turn to the much easier way of visiting Spain, by the railway to St. Sebastian. The travelling here ought always to be safe; but this is not invariably the case. Mr. J. C. Hare relates that when about to cross the Bidassoa, and all heads were out of window watching for the famous Isle of Pheasants, the train went off the line, and everybody was knocked back on to the seats. You are soon made sensible that you are in a new country. You ask his worship the porter to have the graciousness to assist you in lifting your portmanteau ('Moro, hagame el favor de leevar mi maleta'); and you implore his worship the beggar, your brother, for the love of God, to excuse you from giving him anything ('Perdonome usted, por Dios, hermano'). If you should omit such a courteous salutation to a beggar, he or she would follow you with volleys of imprecations and abuse. Once an English merchant expressed a kindly pity for a muleteer, a 'poor fellow,' who was taking charge of his luggage through a drenching rain. The muleteer got into a great passion; he told the merchant that he was a pitiful fellow, while he, the muleteer, was a born nobleman. Mr. Campion declares that at the St. Sebastian market the old women who bring in charcoal look like so many duchesses disguised as sweeps. In going to St. Sebastian you pass through Irun, and perhaps are delayed at Hendaye about your luggage, which, however, will give you the opportunity, if you are so minded, of tasting the famous liqueur. All the country about here, so to speak, teems with history. It would be as well to see, if you have time, the old town of Fuentarabia, and the pretty watering-place of St. Jean de Luz. To those whose notions of St. Sebastian are mainly derived from history, from the pages of Mr. Gleig, Colonel Napier, and the *Wellington Despatches*, the place will present rather a surprise, from its extremely modern character. It has been almost entirely rebuilt, and has broad spacious streets. Some of the graves of Englishmen who fell here are still carefully preserved. The rudiments of an English colony are there already. The winter climate is delicious, and there is an English doctor, should one be wanted, to whose kindness and medical skill I myself have been under the deepest obligations—Dr. W. J. Smith.

But it was rather for the sea and the mountains that I had come; and to walk along the ridges of those noble hills, with the immense Atlantic in full view, was at times rather laborious, but an enjoyment that fully compensated for any labour. On the land side a noble river glided tranquilly to the sea. Mr. Campion, in his *Walk across Spain*, tells us of the immense amount of fishing that goes on at the bridge of the Uremeo, and the huge waves that

break against it, like the Pacific on coral islands. I am afraid that the Spaniards are too lazy to climb their own mountains and appreciate the scenery of their sierras. At least, we had them all to ourselves. Our little party never encountered any tourist. The plan was to walk or take a diligence to some interesting locality, and to return over the hills. The expeditions to Orio and Passajes should be mentioned, especially the latter. We walked, but there is a railway. Passajes possesses a magnificent land-locked harbour, reminding one of Dartmouth and Falmouth, and the inner harbour of Marseilles. Leaving the curious old haven, we mount the hills. Looking down upon St. Sebastian, we perceive that it is a peninsula, inexorably confined within its geographical limits, and its further progress must be made on the mountain terraces. All the country round bears terrible traces of the last Carlist war. Many houses are completely gutted, and some villages are half depopulated. The cannon was at one time pointed against St. Sebastian, but happily the place escaped a further terrible chapter in its warlike annals. The neighbourhood now shows a great deal of improvement. There is a general spread of education, schools of all sorts on all sides, and little or nothing of the sordid poverty which one so often witnesses at home. There are many lovely villas in the neighbourhood, belonging to some distinguished Spanish politicians. For a moderate walk, none pleased me better than one that led through vineyards and gardens by the side of the bay and the river-shore. Coming back, we rested at the Fountain of Health, whose ice-cold spring is canopied by broad foliage, where a few worthy citizens were trying the waters, to which some healing virtue is attached, or perhaps the beverages of the neighbouring little *café*. The charm of these expeditions into the neighbouring country was very great, and was preferable to lounging away all one's time in the alameda, although the band —it had been brought down from Madrid—was very fine, and the ices were peculiarly delicious.

If we want to study history, both in its largest political aspects, and also in the military details, it cannot be studied better than on the spot in St. Sebastian itself. The whole place is bristling with history. Not only Spanish history, but all European history, has more than once been brought to a focus at St. Sebastian. In 1813 Wellington saw that England might probably be deserted by her continental allies, who would form a separate treaty; that Portugal would no longer serve as a place of arms; but that he might find in the Western Pyrenees and the ocean seaboard a new basis for his operations, a defensive position even stronger than that which he had occupied behind the Ebro. This was the great object which determined him to attempt the reduction of St. Sebastian. The siege became one of the greatest sieges of modern history. The military genius of Wellington shone greatly in it; but in consequence of disobedience to Wellington's instructions the greatest disasters were experienced by our army. 'Take the place in the quickest manner, yet do not from overspeed fail to take it.' Such was Wellington's characteristic direction, and he added to the specific instruction that 'fair daylight must be taken for the assault.' The general left in command deviated from his instructions, and the result was the

murderous repulse of the British assault. The Duke of Wellington was at once upon the spot, with all his energies intent on the reduction of the great fort and harbour; but he was obliged to wait for reinforcements and supplies. The way in which he was treated by the Home Government was shameful. Some of the Ministers ought to have been shot or hanged. The First Lord of the Admiralty acted as if he were the deadliest enemy of our Peninsular army. He utterly neglected to watch the coast of Spain, allowing our stores and supplies to be kept in our harbours, and permitting the enemy's supplies to be poured into St. Sebastian. Many of our store-ships were captured by the French for want of protection, and thousands of soldiers were kept idle at Lisbon or Gibraltar for want of transports. For the same reason the soldiers were left without boots and overcoats when the snow was falling on the Pyrenees. When a battering train arrived from England, it was found that it was only furnished with shot and shell sufficient for a day's consumption. It is calculated that the English Ministry did as much injury to their countrymen as a hostile army of sixty thousand men with a first-rate generalissimo. It was only the genius of Wellington that could have counteracted such disadvantages. The horrors of that memorable sack were atrocious. We may condense the account from the narrative of the subaltern. 'The houses were everywhere ransacked, the furniture wantonly broken; the churches profaned, the images dashed to pieces; wine and spirit cellars were broken open; and the troops, heated already with angry passions, became absolutely mad by intoxication. All order and discipline were abandoned. The officers had no longer the slightest control over their men, who, on the contrary, controlled the officers; nor is it by any means certain that several of the latter did not fall by the hands of the former, when they vainly endeavoured to bring them back to a sense of subordination. Night had now set in; but the darkness was effectually dispelled by the glare from burning houses, which one after another took fire. The morning of the 31st had risen upon St. Sebastian, as neat and regularly built a town as any in Spain; long before midnight it was one sheet of flame; and by noon on the following day little remained of it except its smoking ashes. Carpets, rich tapestry, beds, curtains, wearing apparel, and everything valuable to persons in common life, were carelessly scattered about upon the bloody pavement. Then the ceaseless hum of conversation, the occasional laugh and wild shout of intoxication, the pitiable cries or deep moans of the wounded, and the unintermitted roar of the flames, produced altogether such a concert as no man who listened to it can ever forget.'

Unfortunately this was by no means the last military association that England had with St. Sebastian. In 1835 Sir De Lacy Evans and his British Legion appear to take a part in the chronic civil war between the Carlists and Christinos. This of course could only be done by the suspension of the Foreign Enlistment Act. The moral support of our Government was given to Christina. We interfered in the quarrel very much as Russia interfered in the war between Servia and the Porte. In the year above mentioned Sir De Lacy went out to Santander and St. Sebastian. He got his raw forces into a state of drill.

The Carlists were then closing in upon St. Sebastian, which was partly garrisoned by British troops. The lovely harbour of Passajes, within a distance of a few miles of St. Sebastian, was also occupied by the British. Sir De Lacy Evans, with the coöperation of a fleet, attacked the Carlists, and was supposed to have obtained some kind of victory. But the Duke of Wellington openly stated in the House of Lords that the only effect of his success was to remove the investing lines of blockade a mile or two further off. Similarly the English commander made an attack upon Fuentarabia, and was obliged to withdraw with his whole force. We ought, however, to say that this disaster was not unretrieved, and eventually Fuentarabia fell into the hands of the British Legion. Evans went away as soon as the allotted time of his services was expired; but he went away unpaid, and with his troops in a pitiable condition. It was not without a feeling of melancholy that I climbed the fortified hill overlooking the Bay of Biscay, and there noted the monuments to some of the officers who had perished.

A very pleasant place indeed is St. Sebastian. The hotels, being on the high lines of civilisation, are excellent, and in strong contrast with those which one meets in the mountain-districts. I will say, however, for these country hotels, that the bedrooms, though very plain and whitewashed, are scrupulously clean. Living in Spain ought to be cheap; but it will be necessary to make your bargains if you are to have the full benefit of that state of things. The Hôtel du Commerce at St. Sebastian was found to be good and moderate. Many people go to the boarding-houses, Casas de Huespedes, especially in the crowded summer season. I myself was staying with excellent friends, resident in the place, and I need hardly say that they made me at once *au courant* with everything that was going on. The bathing is the great amusement. You cannot find better bathing anywhere, and in this respect I prefer St. Sebastian to Biarritz. The bathing place, La Concha, has a beautiful beach, and here hundreds of both sexes, gaily dressed, though in this respect hardly up to the Biarritz point, will bathe for hours. St. Sebastian, the Gibraltar of northern Spain, is now highly fashionable, and attracts increasing thousands from its Afric districts to this temperate European zone. The bay is half-closed by the island of Santa Clara, and though this has generally the effect of producing a smooth rippling sea, yet in certain states of the wind the Biscayan rollers come in with tremendous power, and those who have joined hands firmest are sundered and overwhelmed. Ropes, floated by buoys, go out to a considerable distance. And the bathing-rooms, Perla del Oceano, are very good.

Just outside the town is the old Plaza de Toros, where the bull-baiting occasionally goes on, and to which the Empress Eugénie used to come from her villa at Biarritz. The bulls of this province of Guipuzcoa are considered very fine; but I am told that the horses are of the most wretched sort, only fit for the knacker. I know that there is a rink, and in all probability you may get lawn-tennis as well. The Spanish tertulia is of course an institution, and the small English colony keep up the national tradition of dinner-giving. If the English people were wise that colony would

be very greatly enlarged. At the cost of a little further travelling they would have as great or greater advantages, and these at a cheaper rate than at Biarritz and Arcachon. I expect that one day they will come at a rush, and then all the prices will go up like a rocket. It will be a great thing for the Britisher if he can lash himself into a state of enthusiasm for the 'pelota,' which is a Spanish equivalent for cricket, or, more properly, for fives and racquets. Then my friend, Mr. Campion, talks of the theatre, and says that his stall only costs him about eighteenpence. There is constant amusement on the alameda, and in the long promenade between the fountains. But where you see the life of the country in its freshest and most genuine form is no doubt in the churches and in the markets. The freshest hours of morning, directly after sunrise, are the best. You should visit them directly before or after your morning dip in the sea. The fresh-gathered fruit in the market is then very agreeable. You find a rich profusion of fruit and vegetables, and sometimes of game; but the most interesting part of it is seeing the peasantry, bold and bright, from the province of Guipuzcoa. The chief church is the Iglesia de Santa-Maria, where there is good music and evermore a haven of silence and repose.

But, as I said before, the neighbourhood of St. Sebastian is even more fascinating than St. Sebastian itself. I hardly know any pleasure comparable to walking along those lonely heights overlooking the broad Atlantic in choice companionship. The one drawback is that you must take some water with you; the water generally fails on the Spanish hills. When you descend to the villages they give you a sort of méringue, that is made of sugar-plum and white of egg, which is dissolved in the water. The Spaniards are all very fond of water. They like their wine; but they like their water still better. They are excellent judges of the quality of water, which they take cold and colourless; even the sherry-makers will not drink sherry, but take the natural unbranded wines. The fountains of a town—'the places of drawing water'— serve not only for rest and refreshment, but are also centres of common talk. In the neighbourhood of St. Sebastian there are many things which tell what civil war is. You pass by many a house which is altogether riddled and shattered by the Carlists. The owner would be invited to join them, and if he did so he would be treated like a volunteer; but if otherwise his property would be destroyed. The humours of a posada in these country places have been often described: the ground-floor is almost a part of the farm-yard, and is sometimes given up to cattle, and even to peasants, who sleep with their cattle. In the morning they shake themselves like the cattle—dispense with the modern superstition of washing—and are ready dressed for the day. I am bound to say that, though quite prepared to find fault with the food, I really liked it. Even garlic and oil are good in their way. While in Spain, eat with the Spaniards. But at St. Sebastian you are on the rail, and therefore in the middle of everything, and you will naturally desire to go to some distance and see as much of things as you can. I will just give one small word of practical counsel. Whether on the mountain or in a *fonda* you had better take a little mental

sustenance, for there is not much, at least of a suitable kind, that will be at hand. Even on the mountains I take the Spanish testament and grammar, and your own memory ought to serve as a dictionary. If you want good Spanish stories, always, in addition to *Don Quixote*, take some stories by Donna Cæcilia Böhl de Fáber, who chooses to call herself Fernan Caballero. These stories are very good, and have an increasing reputation. It is worth while to try and pick up some knowledge of the magnificent Spanish tongue, which, after the preliminary difficulties in pronunciation, is easily attained by those who know Latin or Italian. And so, if you are going my way, good reader, I would say with the courteous Spaniard, 'Go with God,' which he seems to give with a greater sincerity than the *adio* or *adieu:* 'Vaya usted con Dios y buen provech, le haga á usted.' 'Go you with God, and much may it profit your grace.'

F. A.

THE SENIOR PARTNER.

By Mrs. J. H. Riddell, author of 'George Geith,' etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

FAIRLY MATCHED.

'My mind sore misgives me that ye're telling me a lee.'

'Then perhaps when next your mind seeks any information, it will be good enough to do so without my help.'

Mr. McCullagh was very angry; he was so angry, indeed, that his voice actually trembled with rage; and this irritation was not decreased by the cool manner in which Mr. Mostin, grasping with both hands the back of a chair, answered the extremely uncivil remark above recorded without a trace of ill-temper, and yet with what the Scotchman mentally termed a 'taunting sort of smile.'

After their last conversation on the subject he had once again despatched 'Ailfred' out into the world ('as Noah sent the dove,' so suggested that irrepressible gentleman), to try if he could not bring back some more certain information on the vexed subject of Upperton & Co., who were, so Mr. McCullagh confided to himself and his son David, playing 'auld Nick wi' his trade.'

Warily he had suggested he and Mr. Mostin 'needn't fall out over a pound or two.' He had even said, 'Ye'll maybe want a trifle of silver to treat some lad or ither to a pint of beer. Lord, there's a lot to be got out of English folk for even a glass,' and pressed five shillings into Alf's hand, an amount which Alf's fingers did not refuse to close on; further, he presented that slippery individual with a bottle of the whisky; and after all these promises made to him which he knew would be kept, and benefits conferred which he ought to have remembered, Mr. Mostin had the assurance to appear before Mr. McCullagh and say, 'wi' a kind o' girn on his face,' he was not a step further forward than when he stood in that room before!

From most men this statement might have been accepted as a fact; but Mr. McCullagh had known Mr. Mostin 'off and on' since he was a 'wee callant,' and was aware, nobody better, that when Alf, either as man or boy, felt adhering to the literal truth irksome or unprofitable, Nature took a malicious pleasure in giving a certain 'thraw to his mouth,' which revealed volumes to the initiated.

At the moment of his stating—after some previous discursive remarks—he could obtain no further information whatsoever on the genealogy of Upperton & Co., that 'thraw' was painfully visible, and naturally Mr. McCullagh drew his own conclusions.

The mode in which he announced the deduction arrived at might perhaps have been more courteous; but between 'man and man' we are sometimes told 'that substance is everything, the manner nothing.' You can believe this axiom or not, as you please, my reader.

'It's just impossible ye could have been hovering round and

about the premises, with every chance given ye—for the time, ye have—and not be able to track out who's backing him,' maundered on poor Mr. McCullagh, unable to keep silence, and yet feeling himself impotent to clench the assertion he had made.

'I do not see anything impossible in the matter,' observed Mr. Mostin.

'And ye, that I thought had above all men the gift of finding out whatever ye set yerself to work on!'

'You overrated my abilities, Mr. McCullagh.'

'Ay, indeed it would seem sae,' answered that gentleman, with a candour which might have disconcerted any one less indifferent to criticism than the person he addressed. As it was, that person only remarked,

'I've done the best I could, and failed utterly to find out who is Mr. Moorhall's friend at court—who is backing him, from what source he gets his money. Unless some one has left him a fortune lately, it is certainly not his own capital he is losing. You say he must be losing, but I doubt it. He is selling a good deal under you, but that,' added Mr. Mostin, with a slight sneer, 'proves nothing. He might, I fancy, sell for a long time at the same rate as he is doing, and still keep out of the *Gazette*.'

'Ye dinna ken what ye are talking about,' observed Mr. McCullagh, with a heightened colour.

'Perhaps not; at any rate, if I lie under any error, I do so in company with many wiser persons than myself; all the talk is now about the sums you must have coined.'

'Me coined!' repeated Mr. McCullagh. 'Bless us and save us! do folk think the Scotch trade a gold-mine?'

'They do e'en so,' answered Alf Mostin, laughing; 'and they have begun to wonder how you were able to keep the monopoly of it so long.'

'Ah!' observed Mr. McCullagh.

'I can give you one piece of comfort,' said Mr. Mostin.

'Can ye? Then I'll be thankful to get it; and I'm sure, Ailfred, ye ought to do me a good turn, for I've aye stood your friend.'

'You've what?' asked Mr. Mostin, in amazement.

'Stood your friend,' answered Mr. McCullagh, holding to his guns.

'When?' inquired the gentleman thus benefited.

'From the time ye were this height,' said Mr. McCullagh, pointing his meaning by laying one lean yellow hand on the table by which he sat. 'I used to give ye sweeties when ye came to see your aunt, as ye called her; and I made ye welcome to the house as long as I well could; and I'd have helped ye when ye grew a man if ye'd been a bit more dependable; and I'd try to do something for ye still if it was possible to trust ye, or believe ye mean to keep any promise ye ever made, or may hereafter make.'

'But, you see, you can't trust me; and I have quite ceased making any promises,' said Alfred gravely.

'Indeed! and maybe it's just as well.'

'Far better. And now, Mr. McCullagh, as we seem to have quite finished our delightful conversation, I think I will be bending my way to North-street.'

'But I thought ye were going to leave a crumb of comfort behind ye,' suggested Mr. McCullagh.

'So I was, by the bye; by Jove, I had nearly forgotten that,' exclaimed Mr. Mostin. 'I don't

think you need fear Upperton & Co. will be your rivals long.'

'Ay, ay; what makes ye deem sae?' interrupts Mr. McCullagh anxiously.

'I fancy, though they are not losing, they are not making enough to continue the sport of trying to cut your throat. They have done sufficient to injure you materially, and some morning they will retire from the combat.'

'This is grand consolation,' said Mr. McCullagh naïvely. 'Man, why didn't ye begin instead o' ending wi' sic a sang? Go on, go on; I'm fain to hear another stave of it.'

'You won't be so delighted with the ditty by the time I have done, or I am much mistaken,' observed Mr. Mostin dryly. 'When the house of Upperton turns its attention to some more lucrative trade, you will find plenty of other houses springing up from the seed it has sown. As I told you a while ago,—people are now wondering why the deuce they left you in sole possession of the field for so long; therefore in the future you will find you won't have to deal with one competitor, but with a score.'

'My word, Ailfred Mostin, Job's friends were cheerful and companionable sort of bodies in comparison wi' you.'

'Perhaps so; but unlike them, I am in the right. Shippers are saying, "What idiots we were to stand old McCullagh's airs, when we could far more easily have got the goods for ourselves from Scotland!" while the retail houses are cursing their folly in having paid you cash all the time they might have procured the same goods on credit.'

'Weel, aweel!' ejaculated poor Mr. McCullagh.

'If you think it well,' retorted the *mauvais sujet*, 'I am sure I may; but I know, were I in your shoes, I should consider it bad enough. However, you have nobody but yourself to thank for whatever happens. You shook your way of doing business in the faces of struggling men; you have refused good houses credit, till your "system," as you styled it, has become a laughing-stock in the City; you have sold your goods at an enormous profit; you have refused to what you call cumber yourself with articles that are now constantly in demand; and then, as if all this were not enough, you must, for fear of any poor devil picking up the crumbs left from your business-table, bring that bouncing braggart son of yours from amongst your own countrymen, where he might have lied and boasted to his heart's content, and nobody on this side the Border minded, and start him with a great flourish of trumpets, as though you wanted to make the world believe that Providence, from some special liking to the McCullaghs, had given them the monopoly of marmalades and biscuits, and never intended any other house to get a share of the spoil.'

To describe the varying expressions that flitted over Mr. McCullagh's face, as he listened to this outpouring of Alf Mostin's spirit, would be simply impossible. Anger, astonishment, dismay, wounded vanity, all were in turn depicted on his countenance. For once he felt sorely worsted. Making every allowance for animus on the part of Mr. Mostin; let him recall as often as he liked the fact that 'over and over again' he had been forced to tell the young man, not in so many words perhaps, but as plainly as he could, 'It was better to cry over goods, nor after them;' let him whisper

to his own heart, 'Ailfred's jealous o' David,'—he could not fail to feel the sting of the lash Alf Mostin laid on so mercilessly; could not deny to himself there might be something in what this oracle, whose aid he had invoked, said 'all in a burst o' bitterness.'

But he would not show how vexed he was; he thought, even as Alfred was speaking, he must not give that gentleman the satisfaction of knowing his words cut deep. And for this reason, and perhaps because he was so much surprised he could not have argued the pros and cons of the business then, he said, when Mr. Mostin had quite finished,

'I will be in your debt a bit, I think. You have taken a heap o' trouble for me, and it's not your fault more hasn't come of it. There's four poun'; and if that sum seems to ye eensuffecient, I have small objection to put another poun' on the top of it.'

Involuntarily almost Alfred Mostin stretched out a hand to take the wealth thus offered; but next instant, drawing it back, he answered,

'You are not in my debt, Mr. McCullagh. I engaged to do certain work, and I have not been able to do that work; so I cannot take your money. Matters were rather the other way, I fancy,' added Mr. Mostin, with a wicked smile. 'It was I owed you something, and I think I have paid it.'

'For about the first time in my memory of ye, Ailfred,' agreed Mr. McCullagh grimly.

'It is never too late to reform,' was the reply.

'It is aye too soon to rejoice about another man being put to annoyance,' retorted the merchant.

'The statement is admirable as a mere aphorism,' said Alf Mostin; 'yet I scarcely consider it a decent one for you to enunciate.'

'I canna see why not,' returned Mr. McCullagh; 'but surely we have no call to go on chaffering angry words like a couple o' weemen. There's four poun' justly due to ye, and if ye choose to give a sign I'll make it five with pleasure.'

'I haven't earned your money, and I won't take it,' said Mr. Mostin somewhat rudely.

'Times is changed with ye, I'm thinkin'.'

'Times *are* changed with me, Mr. McCullagh,' Alf answered, correcting, quite unconsciously, that gentleman's grammar.

'I can mind the day ye wouldn't have refused four poun', or four shillin'.'

'So can I,' replied Mr. Mostin readily.

'And I am sure I am very happy to ken ye are doing sae well.'

'And I am very certain if you thought I was, the knowledge would not make you happy at all.'

'Come, come, Ailfred, ye mustn't carry on like that. Something has put ye out, man. What has David said to set up your back against us all so high?'

'Not more than you have every one of you done, or would do, if you got the chance,' answered Mr. Mostin, with savage earnestness. 'Fact is, Mr. McCullagh,' he went on, with a poor affectation of laughing at his own anger, 'you and your sons have got into such a way of thinking, as concerning yourselves, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," that it seems hard to poor sinners like myself, who feel they have but as small a chance of prosperity here as of paradise hereafter.'

'As for hereafter,' said Mr. McCullagh, in a tone of unwonted modesty, 'it's no for you or me to speak; but I conceder I do ken something concerning here,

and I am very sure it just lies with a man himself whether he'll compass a fair amount of worldly success, or earn a living, if he earns it at all, haphazard.'

'There may be something in what you say,' replied Mr. Mostin, 'though I don't think there is much. You might not think it, but I have always admired the way in which you walked to success. If you were hard on other men—and you have been, and are, hard as the nether millstone—you have been equally hard to yourself; if you were for ever preaching the doctrine of incessant work and eternal self-denial, you only preached what you practised in your person; if your creed through life has been that money for mere money's sake is worth every honest effort that can be made for its possession, you have never been inconsistent to the faith you professed. It is quite a different matter with your sons. They are poor creatures, and if they ever make any great hit in life it will merely be because you are their father, and they are in consequence able to fight the battle with their backs against a rock.'

Having concluded which agreeable summary of the McCullagh juniors, Mr. Mostin, without any more formal leavetaking than that involved in the phrase 'Good-day,' walked out of the Scotch warehouse and into Basinghall-street, whence he took a circuitous route homewards, in order to compose his ruffled plumage ere repairing to his lonely nest in North-street.

'My son David,' as Mr. McCullagh usually called his youngest born, when referring to him in his intercourse with strangers, who lived at the paternal mansion, was in the habit of returning thither with a laudable punctuality about meal-times; in fact, rather than keep his father waiting a moment, he usually made his appearance some twenty minutes before anything was put upon the table.

He did so on the day when Mr. Mostin had spoken part of his mind; and sauntering leisurely up into the common sitting-room, where Mr. McCullagh chanced to be alone, was greeted by that gentleman with the inquiry,

'What the de'il hae ye been saying to Ailfred Mostin to put up his monkey? He has been here to-day as cross as a bear wi' a sore head.'

'O, I didn't say much to him,' explained Mr. David, who, having been endowed by Nature with a shock of reddish-yellow hair, red whiskers, light-blue eyes, a florid complexion, and white teeth, thought it necessary to supplement these personal advantages with the charms of a ready unabashed manner and fluent speech, twanged with about the very worst Scotch accent that ever came south to astonish English ears. 'I spied him the ither forenoon stop and shake hands with the young woman Robert seems a bit sweet on; so when we met a while later on, I made some remark about "poaching on somebody else's manor." He got as red as fire, and asked me what I meant. I said I meant no harm, only I thought the girl was my brother's jo, and that I must warn him there were bad characters about—meaning no harm, you understand, only a bit of a jest. Well, he flew into a towering rage, wished I would mind my own business, which perhaps I might in the end find enough for me; and added that if I spoke a disrespectful word about the young lady, or, indeed, spoke a word concerning her at all, he would do lots of things I can't well remember. That made me as angry as him-

self, and I said he needn't make such a to-do about a girl I dare be sworn hadn't a sixpence in the world, and who couldn't be a young lady, or she would wear better clothes; whereupon he asked me in a most offensive way how I knew what clothes should or should not be worn by ladies, young or old, as I had never opened my lips to one in my life. After that I don't rightly remember with what words we went at each other; they were not pleasant, I know; and then as a parting shot he thanked Heaven we would soon find our trade leaving us; "and that," he said, "will cut your comb a bit."'

'Lord—Lord!' ejaculated Mr. McCullagh irritably; 'and I did so want to keep him in good-humour.'

'That you'll never do,' replied David. 'He's an eel-condeshioned houn'.'

'He's got a lot of brains,' observed Mr. McCullagh.

'It's a petty he doesn't mak use o' some o' them, then.'

'It is that,' answered the elder man, in a tone his son did not venture to comment on, though it irritated him a good deal, and impaired the appetite with which he sat down to dinner; for Mr. David McCullagh was one of that numerous class who so firmly believe all the cleverness and virtue of the world are concentrated in their own persons, that the very idea of cleverness and virtue being possessed by another seems an absolute affront.

That same evening Mr. McCullagh, having thought the matter out over a single glass of toddy, which was, as a rule, all he allowed himself until the witching hour of night, wrote a letter to North-street, in which, after delicately alluding to David's lack of discretion—a lack he thought ought not to be regarded among friends, as it was only the young man's way—he said he hoped Alfred would let bygones be bygones, and at any rate not quarrel with him because his son had been rash in his speech. He also enclosed an open cheque for five pounds, which he trusted would be accepted as 'better nor nothing.'

Back by the messenger came Mr. Mostin's answer. Marvel of marvels! he reënclosed the cheque. 'I have not earned it,' he said, 'and I don't see my way to earn it. As for other matters, my opinion of you personally remains unchanged. It is precisely what it was years back;' an extremely ambiguous phrase, but one which Mr. McCullagh translated, like a wise man, in the most favourable sense possible.

He did not, however, extend this feeling to the return of the money.

'They have bought him,' he decided, without considering how extremely bad a bargain Alfred Mostin must have proved at any price. 'He'd never otherwise refuse such a sum of money—just a fortune to him, in a manner of speaking.'

Full of this idea, and determined if possible to find out for himself what was in the wind, Mr. McCullagh early next morning repaired to North-street. It was now March: a pleasant feeling of spring was in the air; the streets had been freshly watered; a costermonger was pushing a hand-cart laden with plants in pots, in full flower, down Basinghall-street, and crying at the top of his voice, 'All a-blowin'—all a-growin';' and altogether, as the Scotch merchant walked briskly along, he felt that if he could understand and get a 'good grip' of the 'conspiracy'—so he called it—which had been set on foot

against his trade, he should enjoy the season that had come, and maybe even instruct Janet to buy a pot of musk to set in the window, or a posy of some sort to place in the great china jar his wife had bought, and which still remained intact on the sideboard.

When he arrived at Mr. Mostin's 'diggings,' his eye was attracted by two new notices painted on a board in the hall. One was 'The Schlaxenbergen Seidlitz Powder Company;' the other, 'The Anglo-Irish Lace Association.' Both, the board stated, were to be found on the second-floor, whither Mr. McCullagh, in some perplexity, betook himself.

From the door of the front office Mr. Mostin's name had disappeared entirely, and it was not to be found on the panels of the back room either. Entering the office of the Schlaxenbergen Seidlitz Company and of the Irish Lace Association, Mr. McCullagh found himself face to face with an exceedingly sharp boy, who, on being mildly asked, 'Can I speak with Mr. Mostin?' answered decidedly, and in the manner of one who was no respecter of persons, 'No, you can't.'

'Is he not living here now, then?' inquired Mr. McCullagh, who, in his surprise at the various changes he beheld, forgot at the moment Mr. Alfred Mostin had been residing in North-street so lately as the preceding evening.

'No, he isn't,' replied the boy coolly.

'Do ye know where he is gone?' proceeded Mr. McCullagh.

'No, I don't.'

'Do ye think anybody about the place could tell me where one might find him?'

'It's not likely; but I'll ask, if you wish.'

'I'd be obliged to ye,' said Mr. McCullagh, who, after the boy disappeared into the retirement of the back room, beheld with surprise that, though the furniture was differently arranged from what it had been on the occasion of his previous visit, everything in the apartment was the same—from the carpet to the desk, from the old coal-scuttle to the bookshelves.

The former table was placed lengthwise under the window, and on it were piled circulars concerning the two new companies; likewise samples of seidlitz powders packed in most elaborate boxes, and pattern cards on which specimens of lace were to be seen, occupied every available foot of space in the office.

'Will you please to walk this way?' said the boy, reappearing, when Mr. McCullagh, having exhausted his observations, was wondering whether the head of the Schlaxenbergen Company or the agent of the Lace Association would be good enough to afford him the information he required; and then, as the merchant told the story afterwards, 'he walked before me to the inner door as bold as brass, and, flinging it wide, introduced me into the presence of Ailfred Mostin his ainself.'

Mr. Alfred Mostin—attired in an easy costume, consisting of slippers, a pair of trousers greatly the worse for wear, an old shooting-jacket worn over a blue checked shirt without the usual intermediary of a waistcoat—collarless, tieless, braceless, having a belt girt round his middle 'like a navvy,' thought Mr. McCullagh—advanced to meet that gentleman, and, at sight of his amazed and disturbed countenance, burst into a hearty laugh.

'The boy did not know who you might be,' he explained, clearing *the* easy-chair, and by a

gesture inviting his visitor to sink into its luxurious depths.

'I wonder at ye, I really do!' exclaimed Mr. McCullagh virtuously. 'What can ye be thinking about to learn a lad o' that age to tell a wheen o' lies?'

'My dear sir, in the way of lies, as you delight to call the necessary coin of social life, there is nothing I could teach that boy; even you could not train him to be truthful. He loves falsehood as a duck loves water; he fibs for the sport of the thing. I find him perfectly invaluable. I told you, or perhaps I did not tell you, I was turning over a new leaf. Without his assistance I never should have attempted such an experiment.'

'It's just awful to hear ye,' said Mr. McCullagh; 'awful! I wonder, I do indeed, where ye expect to go to.'

'I don't know,' answered Mr. Mostin, 'and, with all due respect to your wisdom, neither do you; but at all events, I am not afraid of faring any worse because of a little necessary prevarication which everybody understands.'

'Prevarication!' repeated Mr. McCullagh in horror, but he said no more.

'How much better should I be,' persisted Mr. Mostin, forgetting the true old proverb that 'he who excuses accuses,' 'if I left myself at the mercy of every dun who chose to climb these stairs? How much better would the duns be, if you come to that? I can't pay them, and I don't mean to be bothered with them while I am making my fortune. I have tried straightforwardness, Mr. McCullagh, I have tried telling the truth, I have tried honesty, and the conclusion I have arrived at is, the world does not understand any one of the three. It is unable to believe in such a trinity of virtues conjointly or separately, and I intend to waste no more time in trying to convert it.'

'If I hadn't many a year agone ceased to be surprised by anything ye did, Ailfred Mostin, I'd say I wonder ye are not ashamed to talk in such a light sinful manner.'

'Indeed, Mr. McCullagh, you need not wonder at me; you ought to reserve your astonishment for those who have driven me to such straits. Do you remember the story—but no, I am sure you don't, and so I'll repeat it to you. Once upon a time a debtor was telling his friend how much he owed. Said his friend, "Mon,"—they were both Scotch,—"how can ye sleep in your bed at nicht?" "There's naething to prevent me sleeping in my bed," says the other; "*but it often puzzles me sorely how my creditors can sleep in theirs.*"'

Mr. Mostin's enjoyment of this anecdote was so heightened by Mr. McCullagh's grim look of disgust, that he woke the echoes of North-street with his laugh.

'Ye ought to have more sense—ye should indeed,' expostulated Mr. McCullagh—'than to repeat a wheen fool havers even a child would know were jest a heap o' lies.'

'Well, it is not a falsehood, at any rate, to say people don't believe in the honesty of each other,' said Mr. Mostin, with an air of thorough conviction.

'I believe in the honesty of most of my fellow-creatures,' observed Mr. McCullagh, in a religious sort of manner.

'You do! Come, now, confession is good for the soul, it is said; tell me frankly. How many honest men do you suppose you trade with?'

'The bulk of my customers are honest, I am very sure.'

'Then why do you refuse to trust your goods across your doorstep?'

'That's a horse of quite another colour. There is many a reason forbye want of confidence that makes a cautious man prefair to sell for cash.'

'Could you give me one, for example?'

'Certainly: insufficient capital.'

'That might be cause for me to refuse credit; but it is ridiculous to imagine you are similarly situated.'

'That all depends on the bigness of the orders which come in,' answered Mr. McCullagh; 'besides, to be plain with ye, I am not just so strict as ye seem to conceit. When I know I can depend on a man's word,' and here the speaker looked very straight indeed in Mr. Mostin's face, 'I don't mind waiting a wee for my money. It's all according to circumstances. But I didn't come here this morn to trouble ye with arguments of any sort,' proceeded Mr. McCullagh, who, in truth, was getting extremely tired of the argument itself. 'I want ye to do me a small favour, and that is, keep the trifle of money I sent ye last night. Ye've airned it fairly, lad, fairly. If I spoke a bit hasty yesterday I'm sorry for it. The word passed my lips without thought. Ye'll take five poun' from me, wont ye, Ailfred?'

'Sorry to be obliged to refuse. "Declined with thanks" is a sort of thing not much in my way; but in this instance I really cannot say, "I accept, and bless you, my benefactor."'

'Ye must be doing uncommon well,' hazarded the Scotchman.

'Well, yes, I am,' agreed Mr. Alfred Mostin, taking up a bill explanatory of all the blessings to be derived from a three months' course of Schlaxenbergen Seidlitz. 'I think I shall make a pot of money in a very short time.'

Ah, how often had not Alf Mostin felt sure of making his fortune!

'I hope ye're not making a mistake instead,' suggested Mr. McCullagh, with unconscious sarcasm.

'O no, I'm not,' was the confident reply. 'First cast your eye over that circular, and see if you can resist ordering a few boxes of Schlaxenbergen, Observe the testimonials — clergymen, lawyers, public singers, ladies of title. Field-officers declare this medicine preserved our troops in the Crimea during the late inclement weather.'

'And who do you think would be taken in with all this?' asked Mr. McCullagh scornfully.

'You would, for one,' answered Alf Mostin boldly, 'if ye did not know the circular emanated from North-street, and the vendor was myself. The world at large, however, has not the advantage of my acquaintance; and when it reads in the country papers the advertisement which I drew up with the greatest care, and which I flatter myself is a masterpiece of persuasive composition, stamps are at once sent for my circular entitled "Cases and Cures," which, in its turn, fetches orders for this "elegant and delightful medicine, made on the spot from the famous Schlaxenbergen waters, by a new method of evaporation discovered by an eminent German chemist, and recently protected in England by her Majesty's letters patent," vide propectus. Will you take a few bills, Mr. McCullagh; you might put a small bundle up in each of your foreign cases?'

Mr. McCullagh glared at him.

'I'm no so blate, Ailfred, my man,' he observed.

'Or perhaps the lace might find more favour in your eyes,' pursued Mr. Mostin. 'A large and influential party in England is now getting up the periodical *furore* concerning Irish manufactures. Our idea has been to employ travellers to collect lace from the cottages throughout the sister kingdom, just as higglers gather eggs in France, and by bringing the product to our great emporium thus enable purchasers to see at a glance the art-resources which have hitherto lain *perdu* in the Emerald Isle.'

'Ye're a wonderful young man,' said Mr. McCullagh, waving aside the sheet of specimens Alf Mostin thrust under his nose. 'Wi' such a gift o' the gab ye ought to have done better for yourself than ye have done. It just grieves me to see ye wasting your time on such foolishness. Somebody, too, must be finding ye cash for all this; ye can't advertise and print and pay postage for nothing; and I'm very sure it's no your own money ye're making ducks and drakes of.'

'Quite wrong, Mr. McCullagh; it's my own hard silver I have invested in these two ventures. You have always said, "There is nothing like truth." Well, I am going to put your theory to the test—tell you the truth—and the consequence will be you won't believe me. You will say, if not to me, at least to yourself, when you go back to Basinghall-street, "That fellow does not stick at telling a good falsehood when he is about it."

'A short time ago I got unexpectedly a sum of money, which, though not much, seemed a windfall to me. If it had been a large sum I'd have paid off every sixpence I owed, and tried to begin afresh; but as it would only have given a composition of about a farthing in the pound, I thought I had best keep it for myself. If I had paid any one it might have made ill-will, so I decided to pay nobody at present. While I was casting about I heard accidentally of a man who had taken a lot of stuff for making seidlitz for a bad debt, and did not know what the deuce to do with it; and while we were discussing matters he was offered a lot of lace for an old song. I proposed to buy and sell both. He agreed. I knew we should get nothing if I went to the wholesale houses, so decided to endeavour to work the oracle by means of country customers. On these small beginnings I mean to build up a trade, and a good one.'

'I'm sure I hope ye mayn't find it topple over wi' ye.'

'And you don't care to speculate in a few gross of seidlitz powders, or a hundred lots of laces (assorted)? I could supply you exceedingly cheap, and we need not quarrel about terms; and I assure you I will not refuse *your* bill at three months, or even four.'

Mr. Mostin's good temper proved too much even for his straitlaced relative (by marriage, as Mr. McCullagh was always careful to explain), and the Scotchman laughed outright.

'I don't think ye will, my lad, when I ask ye to take one; and as for your goods, you know I never speculate in anything.'

'Then there is nothing I can do for you this morning?' said Alfred, as though he were standing in a warehouse brimful of the most valuable merchandise.

'Nothing, I'm obliged. Ou—ay, there is one wee matter, though. Who's that young lady ye were talking with when David met ye?'

Alfred Mostin did not immediately speak; then, after a pause, he remarked,

'I do not want to be uncivil to a visitor, Mr. McCullagh, or I would ask you what the —— concern it is of yours to whom I speak?'

'In a general sort of way, I'm bound to say none at all; and I ask your pardon if I have seemed to poke my neb where it is no wanted. The reason I asked ye, however, was I've been given to understand Robert is acquaint wi' her too, and seems to have a bit of fancy in that direction.'

'Then if you want any information about Robert's acquaintances, you had better go to him. Since he has been in Pousnetts' house he honours me with precious little of his company.'

'Ye're right, Ailfred; ye're quite right. I oughtn't to have inquired concerning my son's affairs from any one but himself. I am very sorry.'

'There is no harm done,' answered Mr. Mostin carelessly.

'And as ye won't take the trifle of cash, I think I'll be going,' said Mr. McCullagh. 'Good-morning, and I wish ye well.'

'Do you?' thought Alf, as he opened the door, and let him out on the top of the dangerous staircase. 'I am not quite such a fool as to believe that.' While Mr. McCullagh, groping his way down the steep twisting steps, considered,

'It'll be all the better if Robert and he have had an outfall. He always did lead the boy into mischief. As for truth, he does not know the colour of it. I'm sure he has been lying to me through thick and thin this morning. It would not surprise me in the least to find he was started some fine morning in the Scotch trade. Why, they've bought him, they've bought him, and sold me. Well, maybe yet they'll find the tough stuff auld Rab is made of.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. M'CULLAGH ASKS A QUESTION.

No great man ought to have a son. Orators, diplomatists, authors, preachers, should leave no male behind to trade upon a fame his puny exertions could never have compassed, to drag a brilliant reputation through the mire of incompetency, and render the degenerate descendant of a mighty name the laughing-stock of the world, which bowed down before the genius of him who had brains to make a grand success.

It is the same, to a certain extent, in business. The self-made man, who from penury has been able to climb to success, who from small beginnings has gained large possessions, should only rear daughters, whom he can dower munificently, and barter away for rank, or learning, or even a larger amount of money than he himself possesses. Sons, however, he should not have. Inheriting all their father's least amiable qualities, they miss the training of circumstances he received, the hard blows of fortune, the indifference of society, the enforced self-denial, the knocks to pride, the smart slaps to vanity. Stepping into the position made for them by their parent, they imagine all they own has been won by themselves; they forget the advantages with which they start, and, from the high ground on which his exertions have placed them, look down with a keenly critical eye upon the road trodden by one who may chance, and usually does chance, to have more sense in his little finger than they

possess in the whole of their collective bodies.

Dimly Mr. McCullagh was beginning to comprehend something of this truth. His sons were, he felt, getting 'a bit uplifted,' 'outstripping his old-fashioned notions;' inclined also, it might be, to consider whether he had done all he should have accomplished.

Kenneth, for instance—Kenneth, of whose exaltation he had been so proud—was not long affianced ere he wrote to know what his father proposed doing for him in the way of 'house-plenishing,' and, indeed, went so far as to suggest that a house itself would not be an ungraceful form of wedding gift.

He instanced two cases where houses had not been merely presented to the happy bridegroom, but furnished from tip to toe, from garret to cellar; and when Mr. McCullagh decidedly declined to do more 'nor give him a handsome present, or a hundred-pound note, if he preferred buying something for himself,' adding, that, when he and his wife came together, he would have thought a 'heap of the half,' Mr. Kenneth turned very sulky, not to say impertinent: reminded his father the world had not been standing still this thirty years, that wives now expected to have things different from what contented their mothers; further, that in his opinion his father ought not to consider five times a hundred pounds to enable him to make a good start in his new position.

In reply to this extremely explicit statement Mr. McCullagh enclosed a cheque for the sum he had originally mentioned, intimating at the same time that Kenneth could 'either take it or leave it,' and adding, 'things hadn't changed so much in Basinghall-street that bank-notes were to be picked up off the pavement.'

Kenneth kept the cheque, and duly passed it through his bankers; but, while thanking his father for his present, he said he could not exactly understand why one son should receive so little, and another so much. There was, he truly remarked, a considerable difference between one hundred pounds and seven thousand, which, he understood, had been given or advanced to Robert.

'Ye're mightily mistaken,' wrote back the head of the family, 'if ye think your eldest brother has had a farthing from me. He had not to take a penny into Pounetts'.'

It was trying, Mr. McCullagh considered at his leisure, to find money 'so uppermost' in the minds of his children, as if, from their youth, they had not been taught to consider shillings and pounds of more importance than learning, or breeding, or kindliness, or the gentle courtesies of life. Basinghall-street was not, of late years, a region in which the softer virtues found congenial soil. How they might have flourished in the olden days, when English merchants of the best school lived there, and reared sons and daughters, and dispensed hospitality with no niggard hand, and charity which was not blazoned forth to the world, is quite another matter. Plain auld Rab's lot had been cast in a different era; and in his long and brave struggle with fortune, though he had 'lived honest, and worked hard, saved all he could, and spent nothing which was not absolutely needful,' he had forgotten a man may be rich in money, and yet poor in happiness, and that if he desires to have loving hearts around him in age, he must sow

the seeds of affection broadcast in his youth and prime.

And now, what did he find? That his very sons only regarded his wealth, and that one of them, at all events, looked upon him as 'a bit of a fool.'

'That "weary Davie," who is as full of new-fashioned crotchets as an egg is of meat,' groaned Mr. McCullagh, 'thinks I know nothing of my own business—the business I made—and that he could work up a trade in half the time.'

Mr. David was indeed at no pains to conceal this opinion. 'Ye're behind the times,' he was wont to say to his father, 'all behind; ye have not a notion what is going on in the North. I could name houses where not an article sent into the market is genuine: everything is made out of something else. It is amazing the perfection to which adulteration has been brought. Why, people laugh nowadays at the notion of selling thoroughly sound articles. The great point is to find a cheap substitute for an expensive one. The period is past for such conscientiousness as you affect, sir. Ere long you will find that unless you go with the swim you will be left high and dry amongst your "home-made jams and orange marmalades," and suchlike.'

'I'll take my chance,' said Mr. McCullagh dryly. 'I believe a sound article will always command a purchaser.'

'It may,' answered the younger man doubtfully; 'but I think you will find a cheap one commands a good many more; and I tell you candidly, if this business were mine I would go in for a different sort of trade altogether.'

'Weel, weel!' exclaimed Mr. McCullagh, 'when it is yours ye can do as ye please: meanwhile there'll no sweetened turnips go out of any place I'm owner of as choice Seville, or glucose disguised with rotten figs be sold here as finest raspberry preserve.'

'It is all a question of time,' answered Mr. David easily; 'ye'll come to it yet. Why, only remember no new man is making anything now out of genuine goods; the public don't care twopence whether things are genuine or not so long as they taste well. Consider the soups that are being shipped daily to the Crimea. I don't say I should like to eat them myself, because I have been behind the scenes; yet how good they are! how exquisitely they are flavoured! how well they taste!'

Upon an average every other day at that period, and for a long time after, there appeared some new sort of 'compressed food:' from horses' forage to hospital diet, all articles were so to be manipulated that freight should be reduced to a minimum.

There was just then a fearful thing to look upon exposed for sale in most shops, principally oilmen's, where, besides its own natural odour, it acquired the additional flavours of yellow soap and tallow candles.

It was exhibited to the public reposing against walls and doorways, and was even to be seen on the pavements leaning against convenient window-ledges, set up on end like a flagstone, being of about the same size and thickness, only curiously mottled, and exciting by its extraordinary appearance a good deal of notice and comment. This fearful triumph of the caterer's art, which smelt like seaweed, and looked—and, indeed, must have been—extremely dirty, was compressed vegetables. A piece could be chipped off with a hammer and put in water to

soak, when it was supposed to impart a fine flavour to soup, and, indeed, provide for a mere trifle all the various items a cook would order in detail from the greengrocer. David McCullagh ardently desired to add this product of human ingenuity to the 'honest stock' his father had ordered in, and was, indeed, still ordering, from the good men and true, north of the Tweed, who had as yet condescended to none of those tricks of trade a new generation had taken to with an avidity which seemed unintelligible to a person who, like poor Mr. McCullagh, had made his money after a very different fashion, and was truly, as his son said, behind the times. To Basinghall-street the younger McCullagh repaired one day, with a piece of the dainty in question wrapped up in paper. He did not tell Mistress Nicol the nature of the article he had introduced into the house, and would have smuggled it into the broth then in process of manufacture, but that, Janet appearing at the very moment when he was about, to quote her own words, 'to spoil good victuals,' a controversy arose which both parties were obliged eventually to refer to the master of the establishment.

Then ensued the first serious quarrel Mr. McCullagh ever had with one of his children; then David was told if he couldna content himself with old ways that had served his father well enough, it would be best for him to return to those that seemed to suit him better.

'I have long known ye were trying to remodel the business I established before ye chanced to be thought of,' finished Mr. McCullagh, 'but it is hard I should have to put a guard on my kitchen too. Ye'll be bringing home next some sirloin off an old mare, or a salt round of beef cut from an ass. I'll no have it, David. Ye can't say but I have dealt fairly and honestly by ye; and ye shall deal fairly and honestly by me, or else we'll just pairt company.'

'I meant no harm,' answered David; 'I only wanted to show ye what right good stuff it was ye were refusing to deal in. But there's nobody except Robert can please ye now. Maybe if I'd got a partnership in a big house ye'd think more of the suggestions I make.'

'When ye get a pairtnership in a big house it'll be time enough to consider that question,' answered Mr. McCullagh; 'and as for Robert, the lad's never had a halfpenny from me, and I can't see the reason why ye're one and all girding at him, because he has chanced to fall in with good fortune and made the best of his opportunity.'

'I wonder how ye'll like his wife?' retorted David, shooting the only arrow that lay ready to hand.

'I'll be able to tell ye better when he has got one,' said Mr. McCullagh; and taking no verbal notice of the sneer on David's face, he walked out of the room, thinking it really was time he spoke to Robert about the 'talk' he could not help hearing.

Months had gone by since he told Alfred Mostin he would ask Robert himself about the young lady 'folk were making mention of;' but somehow, upon the rare occasions when he and his first-born met, he had not found an opportunity to touch on so delicate a subject.

Since the change at Pousnette'—since, in fact, Robert was admitted as one of the firm—he had noticed a great alteration in the young man. Mr. McCullagh was

fain to admit that good fortune had greatly improved his son; he was more thoughtful in his looks and quieter in his manner, more ready to listen when his seniors were expressing their opinions, less eager to air his own notions. He was not so much taken up with himself either; even Miss Nicol remarked she fancied Robert's vanity must have met with some sort of upset, for he did not seem half so 'conceity' as he used to be.

In good truth the young man had enough to think about and feel anxious concerning. That awful debt, the interest of which was, sleeping or waking, weekday or Sunday, running on, might well cause him to think less of his dark hair and the fit of his clothes. All unknown to his father, he was carrying a burden which might well have crushed the spirit of a bolder man. He had anxieties he could not mention to any one; as a matter of fact he was as much a subordinate as in the days when he only held the rank of manager. He did not know what was going on; he was not consulted about any fresh arrangement. Mr. Pousnett never asked his opinion before deciding what was to be done. For that matter he did not take counsel with his own sons, which made it all the more difficult for Robert to assert his rights—a feat, indeed, he did not attempt. Always Mr. Pousnett had been the head of the firm; now it was evident he meant actually, though not nominally, to be the only person in it. He was the mainspring of the whole concern. As Mr. Pousnett junior said, 'By George, if the governor was to be found dead some fine morning, I don't know who would be able to carry on the business.'

Ignorant of the many causes which combined to produce the depression of spirits under which Robert evidently laboured, Mr. McCullagh not unnaturally attributed the change in his son to disappointment at being excluded from the delightful society that obtained in Portman-square. He was well aware 'the store' Robert set by 'great folks.' He knew 'the lad had always been a bit above his station,' and he had sense and kindly feeling enough to sympathise with one of 'his own blood,' who, after having had his 'hopes raised high,' was all in a minute left out in the cold.

Without intruding the Pousnett family upon his 'familiars,' Mr. McCullagh did not allow those with whom he was on intimate terms to remain ignorant of the fact that he had been bidden to the great man's house and treated as an honoured guest amongst the 'highest and richest;' and he could understand how vexed Robert must feel when obliged to confess he had never dined with his chief save once, and that, although his father received many a pressing invitation, he himself was treated as though he had nothing to do with the firm.

About the middle of June, the elder man's attention chanced to be specially directed to this point by noticing a look in Robert's face he 'couldna just fathom,' by receiving a note from Mr. Pousnett asking him to dinner, and by hearing an ill-natured remark from David to the effect that 'grand as Robert thought himself, he evidently was not counted grand enough for the Pousnetts.'

With that charming frankness for which the household in Basinghall-street was noticeable, David made this observation in his brother's presence, and Robert an-

swered it in a spiritless manner with the words,

'So it seems.'

'I'll walk a step with ye,' said Mr. McCullagh, when his eldest son rose to go. 'If ye're returning to the office we may as well make through Austin Friars. It's quiet and out of the din.'

From which suggestion Robert understood his father wished to speak to him.

'There's a thing I've had it on my mind to say to ye for some time past,' began Mr. McCullagh, when, leaving Moorgate-street behind, they found themselves in the alley leading to Austin Friars; 'but I did not care to meddle in the matter as it scarce seemed my business.'

'Good Heavens, he cannot know anything about Snow!' thought Robert, in a panic; but he only said, 'Indeed, sir!'

'I don't think putting in my word can do any harm now, though,' proceeded the other, 'and it may save ye feeling vexed when David is on with his jeers. I know the reason Mr. Pousnett does not bid ye to his house. He told me straightforward the time ye were away in Holland.'

'And what may that reason be?' inquired his son, with a natural curiosity and a great sense of relief.

'He was just uneasy lest ye might take it into your head to be making up to one of his daughters.'

'To one of the Miss Pousnetts?'

'To one of them,' agreed Mr. McCullagh.

'Why, such a notion never entered my mind!' exclaimed Robert.

'Maybe not; but he was afraid it might.'

'It never could. What should I do with a fine lady for a wife?'

'Ye may well ask that,' returned Mr. McCullagh approvingly.

'Why, Miss Pousnett's dress must cost more than I am ever likely to make a year.'

'Well, I wouldn't go quite so far as that; but I agree with ye that a fine lady's no a fit wife for a plain man.'

Robert winced a little. Even yet he was not prepared to class himself in the latter category.

'But that's neither here nor there,' remarked Mr. McCullagh airily. 'All I wanted to tell ye was ye needn't be fretting yourself, thinking Pousnett meant to put any slight on ye.'

'I'm not fretting myself,' answered Robert, who looked at the moment almost as dull as Effie had ever done.

'And while we're on the subject of young ladies,' continued his father, 'I'd like ye to tell me who that is ye've been seen walking with. Mind,' added Mr. McCullagh hastily, 'I don't say I've any right to ask ye; but I'd be well pleased if ye'd no objection to say.'

'I have no objection at all, sir,' answered Robert; 'in fact, I meant to speak to ye on the subject if you had not spoken. The young lady is a Miss Lilands, who, I hope, will one day be your daughter-in-law.'

'I deemed as much,' ejaculated Mr. McCullagh, without committing himself to any expression of pleasure at the prospect offered.

'She is a lady, though not a fine one,' went on Robert, a little flurried.

'Ay, ay,' commented Mr. McCullagh. 'And how long have ye and she been acquaint?'

'Long enough for me to be sure she is the only girl I could ever marry.'

'Well, ye're old enough to know your own mind,' said his father ambiguously.

'I hope so,' answered Robert;

'and when you see her I think you will not wonder at my choice.'

'Where did ye fall in with her?' asked Mr. McCullagh, which might have proved a difficult question had his son not often mentally faced the certainty of its being propounded.

'First at a friend's, and afterwards in her mother's house.'

'Ah, she's got a mother, then?'

'Yes, she has got a mother,' agreed Robert.

There was a minute's pause—a blessed truce, the young man felt it to be—ere the resumption of hostilities. Then:

'She's no one of the Mostin lot, is she, Robert?' asked Mr. McCullagh anxiously.

'No, sir; neither friend nor relation.'

'That's a good thing. I was always afraid ye might get caught by some of them.'

'None of them ever tried to catch me.'

'That's all ye know about it. However, as they have not done so, there's no harm happened. What made me put the question was I heard she had been speaking to Ailfred.'

It was on Robert's lips to say, 'Some one seems to take a vast amount of interest in my affairs;' but he wisely refrained, and contented himself with the somewhat jesuitical statement, 'Alfred only knows Miss Lilands through me.'

'I see,' observed Mr. McCullagh. 'And how far have things gone with ye?'

They had not passed out into Throgmorton-street, but were pacing up and down opposite the Dutch church while this conversation was in progress.

'Well, pretty far,' confessed Robert. 'I have asked her to marry me.'

'And she said "yes," of course?'

'No; she said she could not leave her mother.'

'Why, what would hinder her?'

'Mrs. Lilands is ill.'

'What ails her?'

'They lost a law-suit, or rather there was some disappointment about a law-suit, which brought on a fit, and Mrs. Lilands has never been the same since.'

'They're poor, then,' was the conclusion to which Mr. McCullagh instantly jumped.

'They have enough to live on,' amended Robert.

'Where is their house?'

'Out at Old Ford.'

It cost Mr. McCullagh junior an effort to make this confession.

'I'd like well to see the young lady.'

'I trust you will one day.'

Like an old diplomatist, Mr. McCullagh took no notice of this reply; and it was not until they were nearing Mr. Pousnett's City quarters that he asked,

'I suppose ye are mighty busy just now, Robert?'

'No, indeed, we are very slack this week. I have nothing to do when I get back except sign a few letters.'

'Then I'll tell ye how we'll plan it, Robert. I will come back for ye in half an hour. There is a place I want to call at near hand; and then ye can take me out to Old Ford, and make me acquainted with the lady that's to be Mrs. Robert junior.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

OPINIONS DIFFER.

If he could have thought of any decent excuse for refusing to comply with his father's request, Robert junior would, with avidity, have availed himself of it. There were reasons why he did not

desire to introduce any one belonging to him into the small house where his lady-love dwelt without due notice being given of the impending visit. As he sat in his office he formed wild plans for avoiding the difficulty. He thought of going away and leaving a note for his parent, stating he had suddenly been called west. He decided one moment he would tell a clerk to stop him on the threshold as he was going out, and make mention of some important business which could not be delayed; and the next fancied it might be better to feign an attack of sudden indisposition, and send for a doctor. There was nothing indeed, visionary or unpractical, that he failed to grasp at for the first five minutes after his father left him; but a little reflection soon showed the impolicy of even attempting to defer the evil hour. Mr. McCullagh was not a man to be 'put off' on any pretext whatever without forming unfavourable suspicions in consequence. Some day or other he must see where the Lilands lived, and how; at a not remote period it would, Robert felt, be necessary to let him understand how matters really stood. And the more he thought over the position, the more resigned he became to let affairs take their course. He had hoped to persuade Miss Janey to go with him to Basinghall-street and make his father's acquaintance in that cheerful abode; but now he considered it might be as well to get the interview over without the knowledge of Miss Nicol or David. Yes, things were all ordered for the best, he decided.

If Mrs. Lilands only chanced to be asleep in her easy-chair, or safely stowed away in the privacy of her own room, the ceremonial might pass over without any hitch. On the other hand, if Mrs. Lilands were awake and refused to speak—a matter of not uncommon occurrence—the visit would prove awkward. However, he had told his father the lady's health was bad; and he was well aware that, in Mr. McCullagh's eyes, sickness covered a multitude of sins.

'I only hope she won't be downrightly rude,' he prayed; for more than once he had seen his future mother-in-law in the worst of tempers, and felt that if, on the present occasion, she 'exhibited vice,' to use Alf Mostin's phrase, it would require all Janey's tact, and all his own patience, to render the interview other than a total failure.

'You must let me call a hansom, father,' said Robert, when they were standing side by side in Leadenhall-street. 'It will be too far for you to walk.'

'Too far!' echoed Mr. McCullagh, in high good-humour; for it was not often his son addressed him in such filial fashion. 'Nonsense, lad; just a pleasant saunter. I'm in the mood for stepping out. It's the very sort of day for a little exercise—fine, but not too warm; and the bit of a breeze that's springing up is delightful.'

Glad to have broken the ice when his parent was in so genial a mood, Robert, as they proceeded, embraced the opportunity of giving an account of the Lilands family. He traced their pedigree back to a period long anterior to the Conquest; he told all the Lilands had been and all they had done—so far, at least, as it seemed desirable to chronicle their beings and doings; he described Lilands Abbey; he touched upon the amount of money Mrs. Lilands had hoped to receive under the will of General Lilands, Janey's

great-uncle; he made casual mention of the terrible fall, in a social and pecuniary sense, their present position must seem, when contrasted with the beauties of the fine old English mansion where Mrs. Lilands had resided for some years before the General's death; and, he observed incidentally, he did not believe there was another girl in the world who could, under the same conditions, have kept up her cheerfulness like Janey.

'It's no a bad sort of name that,' said Mr. McCullagh, wisely refraining from committing himself to any comment on Robert's statements; 'but I prefer Jeanie.'

'I am sure she would be delighted to hear you call her Jeanie,' observed Robert diplomatically; but he could not elicit any corresponding reply from his father. Mr. McCullagh was far too old a bird to be caught by any chaff of that sort; and he did not mean to say a word for or against the match till he had seen the young woman and judged for himself.

It is scarcely necessary, however, to add that he started for Old Ford with a sort of doubt in his mind, which certainly Robert's not very judicious statements concerning the wealth and renown of the Lilands family were ill calculated to dissipate.

'There's a screw loose somewhere,' decided the canny Scot. 'If there wasn't, people like these wouldn't foregather with Robert. Only maybe,' he thought, after a pause, 'they have heard some word about *me*, and deem him a fish better worth catching than he is in reality;' for Mr. McCullagh had already gauged the truth of his son's position at Pousnetts'.

'Only a wee above a manager,' he soliloquised, careful always to keep this opinion to himself. 'Poor fellow, he has not wit enough to make a stand and keep it. Only till my dying day it will remain a standing mystery to me why Pousnett took him at all.'

'It's not much of a place,' said Mr. McCullagh, as he and his son stood in front of the little garden-gate, waiting for admission; 'but the air is good. I think I feel the smell of new-mown grass, Robert. What d'ye say?'

Robert, who at that moment could distinguish nothing save the mingled scents of clove-pinks, June roses, white lilies, and sweet peas, agreed that he thought he did.

'And they've made the most of their bit of ground,' added Mr. McCullagh, with gracious condescension, surveying the tiny beds edged with box, where the flowers mentioned above were blooming with prodigal profusion, as flowers always do bloom in gardens belonging to the poor.

To this Robert made no answer. He knew who had made the most of that bit of ground for Janey; he knew who had not been above doffing his coat and working in his shirt-sleeves, and grubbing in the earth and otherwise disgracing himself, when he, Robert, would gladly have paid a labourer any sum of money rather than see his relation stoop so low. Between himself and Alf there had occurred some sharp passages on this very subject; and now the place was a bower of beauty, and every one who passed by stopped and admired the humble cottage set in such a wealth of flowers and fragrance.

'I don't mind now when I've seen such a garden,' went on Mr. McCullagh, innocently unconscious that he was driving his son to the verge of desperation. 'Look at those harebells. Why, I haven't come across a harebell this thirty year and more.'

'Haven't you, sir?' said Robert faintly, as they filed up the narrow

walk, guarded by the miniature maidservant, who, in answer to his inquiry, stated that 'Miss Lilands was within.'

It was surely, thought Mr. McCullagh, the smallest hall on earth in which he found himself, while the little girl squeezed past, to duly announce the visitors.

'It's just an entry,' he reflected, reverting to the simple phraseology of his tender youth; 'and the house is no better nor a labourer's. Well, this is a queer sort of place to find gentlefolk located.' With which idea he crossed the threshold of the sitting-room, and, lifting his eyes, conceived a hatred—I use the word advisedly—to Janey Lilands on the spot.

If the girl had been dressed as 'beseemed her station,' like either of the Misses Pousnett, or looked a 'quiet ordinary sort of body,' after the pattern of Effie, Mr. McCullagh might not have received the shock he did. As matters were, however, he felt Miss Lilands had no business in this world. She was 'clean out of place.' Not her humble surroundings, not her cheap dress, not the evidences of straitened means, which were clearly visible in her home, could rob this 'young woman' of the birthright she had inherited, detract from her beauty, destroy the charm of her manner, change the sweetness of her voice, obliterate the broad line of demarcation that separated her from the class to which Mr. McCullagh belonged, and which in his heart he believed to be the only good, virtuous, and desirable class on earth.

'Voice, manner, looks,' he decided, 'were all dead against her. The lad's mad, clean mad, or he would see she is taking him for nothing but his money;' and then he civilly returned her greeting, and said some words about hoping he was not intruding.

'We are very much obliged to you for coming at all,' answered Janey; but though she made most creditable efforts to get her face to testify to the sincerity of her words, she failed for a minute to do so. Robert had often attempted to describe his father to her; but what form of words could have reproduced Mr. McCullagh to the imagination as he appeared in the flesh?—a small, mean-looking, ill-dressed man, with an unpleasant voice and a dreadful accent, who would have seemed bad enough in the vague character of parent to any one, but who, standing in that close relationship to Robert, literally shocked poor Janey to such an extent she could scarcely speak with composure.

'Let me introduce you to mamma,' she went on, turning towards the armchair, where sat Mrs. Lilands, nodding and smiling in a fatuous manner, which appalled Mr. McCullagh and, as he confessed afterwards, threw him all out in his reckoning. 'This is Mr. McCullagh, Mr. Robert's father, who has been so kind as to call and inquire how you are,' she explained.

'O, better, better,' answered Mrs. Lilands; 'most thoughtful, I'm sure;' and then she made signs which Miss Janey explained meant that she wished the stranger to take a chair near her.

'Mamma is quite in good spirits to-day,' she added, turning to her adorer with a smile.

As for poor Mr. McCullagh, he advanced to the seat allotted to him with a feeling of trepidation, not to say terror. Written plainly across Mrs. Lilands' face was the story her daughter could not or would not see; that story indeed which seems to fade away under

the gaze of familiar eyes, while it appears to strangers to be branded in such letters that he who runs must surely read if he be not actually blind.

There was that gray shade resting upon the features, which only comes when the mind is hopelessly affected; the wandering anxious look in the vacant eyes; the twitch, showing the muscles have lost their power of control; the restless movement of the idle hands; the unmeaning smile; the purposeless inquiry of the fitful glance.

In his day and generation Mr. McCullagh had seen and been intimate with many a one of that large community which used formerly to be permitted to roam about at large, and which he broadly styled 'naturals;' and if no one else in that room realised that Mrs. Lilands' senses were lost beyond recovery, he did.

'She is as crazy as auld Betty that used to frighten us all when we were bairns,' he muttered; and as he had never quite got over the terror Betty implanted in his young bosom, it was with a species of horror he nerved himself for the *tête-à-tête* Mrs. Lilands was evidently contemplating.

'I'll hev to be gey and civil to her,' he thought, 'or the Lord only knows what notion she may take into her head. Deliver us, what is she looking for now?' he added to himself, as Mrs. Lilands began, in a feeble but persistent way, to search her skirt and then the chair for something she missed.

Instantly Janey was by her side. 'What is it, mamma dear?' she asked. 'O, your fan;' and lifting that article, which was lying on a small table close at hand, she presented it to her mother, who, lying back and half-closing her eyes, opened that coquettish weapon, and at once proceeded to demolish Mr. McCullagh, by using it with all the arts and graces of twenty years previously.

'Janey,' came uncertainly from the lips that could utter no word resolutely again for evermore.

'Yes, mamma.'

'The Dean will take some tea.'

'I have told Milly to bring the tray in.'

'Perhaps he would like to walk through the grounds.'

Janey threw an appealing look at Mr. McCullagh, as she answered,

'I do not think he would; he has had a long walk and is tired.'

'Yes, I should prefair to remain where I am for the present,' said Mr. McCullagh bravely, though he was sitting on thorns.

'So kind, so very kind of you to come so far,' murmured the lady, still fanning herself.

'O, that's nothing to speak of,' answered Mr. McCullagh. 'It's no so far at all.'

'It always seems to me an immense distance,' said Mrs. Lilands, in her best company manner, the effect of which was certainly spoiled by that draw of the mouth and drop of the lower lip; 'and of course we always drive.'

'Weel, it's the easiest when ye can afford it, no doubt,' agreed Mr. McCullagh; 'but, for my own pairt, I've aye been used to Shanks's mare, and I find that a very good way of getting over the ground, and cheap too.'

Mrs. Lilands looked puzzled; she was evidently trying to recollect the name of Shanks as a livery-stable keeper, and failed.

'How is dear Mrs. Crattock?' she asked, abandoning the previous attempt, and putting this question in a tone of the deepest interest.

'She is very well, I thank you,' said Mr. McCullagh, wondering who Mrs. Crattock might be.

Mrs. Lilands smiled idiotically, and nodded at him, while the play ceased for a moment.

'You will tell her,' she entreated, 'you will be sure to say, I should certainly have driven over to see her ere now—only—only—I have not felt very strong of late;' and the poor lady looked at her trembling fingers as she spoke, while with one thin white hand she began plucking at the fringe of her shawl.

'Ay, indeed; I'm vexed to hear that,' observed Mr. McCullagh, true to his *rôle* of keeping 'this daft creature' in good temper. 'What is the matter?'

'Well, I can scarcely tell you; even the doctors seem uncertain. But then, you see, these local doctors are not much good, are they?'

'They're none at all,' agreed he recklessly.

'The General is talking of getting down Sir George Ronald; he who saved the dear Bishop, you remember.'

'I mind,' said Mr. McCullagh mendaciously.

'It was before your time, though,' amended Mrs. Lilands. 'The old Dean lay dying then.'

'I meant to say I heerd tell of it,' Mr. McCullagh hastened to explain.

'Yes, every one heard of it, for Dr. Forbes and all the other local practitioners had given the case up; and so— What was I going to remark?'

'That the General wanted to have him to see you.'

'Yes, O yes; thank you so much, Mr. Dean; and then, you know, he might be able to give me something.'

'That he certainly might.'

'You are of the same opinion?'

'I don't see how anybody could be off being of the same.'

'Then I shall tell the General directly he returns. Janey!'

'Yes, mamma.'

'Do not let me forget to mention to your uncle that Mr. Dean quite agrees with him in thinking it would be well to send for Sir George Ronald. I feel quite satisfied he could cure me at once. You see,' she went on, speaking confidentially to Mr. McCullagh, 'I can't sleep at night. I get no settled rest. I do not suppose till I get over the shock caused by the Admiral's death I shall feel quite well.'

'I am afraid ye won't, ma'am.'

'And I suppose the cathedral is looking charming?'

'It's much the same as usual; I see no change in it,' answered Mr. McCullagh, who felt each moment that he was drifting further and further out to sea.

Meanwhile Janey was making the tea, and Robert whispering to her.

'This is a change indeed. How long has she been like that?'

'Since the day before yesterday,' answered the girl. 'When she awoke she thought she was back at the Abbey, and asked me to tell Rose—that was her maid—to bring her coffee.'

'And the fancy has never since left her?'

'Not for any length of time. When it does she begins to cry. She asked the doctor this morning if he did not think a short drive in the open carriage would do her good.'

'Who on earth does she take my father for?'

'The Dean of Betford. There is,' added Janey, turning her eyes in the direction of Mr. McCullagh, and withdrawing them again with a slow irrepressible smile, 'a certain likeness. Yes, certainly your father does resemble the Dean.'

'I suppose we had better go soon?'

'Yes; there may come a change any minute.'

To have seen the way in which Mr. McCullagh refused to eat in that house, any one might have imagined bread was five shillings a loaf and butter a guinea a pound. Even the cup of tea he drank, with little sugar and no milk, seemed swallowed under protest.

'Ye've no call to attempt this sort of thing,' was evidently that gentleman's opinion; and with the same genial spirit he looked askance at the showy curtains and the vases filled with flowers, and the little nicknacks, relics of a former time and station; at the beautiful lace Mrs. Lilands wore round her throat and wrists; at the rings that glistened on her wasted fingers; at her jewelled watch and valuable chain; at a crayon portrait of Janey when she was five years of age; and an old, old pug, fat, dull, and almost blind, that lay on a cushion in the corner, and took no notice of Mr. McCullagh or anything else, till Janey poured him out a saucer of milk, when he awoke, and lapped it up, and then, coiling himself round, went instantly to sleep again.

Everything which was worst in Mr. McCullagh's nature—meanest, most suspicious, least amiable—sprang into life on the occasion of that ill-starred visit; but he retained his resolution to the last, and parted with Mrs. Lilands on terms apparently of the greatest cordiality. In bidding him farewell, and making a futile attempt to rise in order to do honour to so distinguished a guest, she upset a whole cup of tea over her dress, which was of silk and still handsome; and Mr. McCullagh could but consider it another crime on the part of Janey that she took this accident as quite a matter of course, as a trifle not worth making any fuss concerning; merely soothing her mother, and trying to divert her attention by calling Robert to her side.

'Upon my saul, that's a nice sort o' hornets' nest my lad has got himself into now!' thought the wary Scotchman, as, with a feeling of intense personal relief, he found himself once more in the little hall, with the door wide open, and Milly standing at the gate, which she had unlocked, to afford them egress.

'I'm no for walking back, Robert,' said Mr. McCullagh, as they paced together along the dusty road. 'I'll make the best of my way to the station. Which direction are you bound for?'

'I shall cut across to Stepney,' answered his son, 'after I have seen you to the train.'

'All right,' agreed Mr. McCullagh; and they walked on for a short distance in total silence.

At last Robert could bear it no longer, and began,

'Well, sir?'

'Weel, Robert?'

'What do you think of Miss Lilands?'

'I haven't thought much about her.'

'Don't you consider her very handsome, sir?'

'She's no that ill-favoured,' conceded Mr. McCullagh.

'And don't you agree with me she is a girl any man might be proud and happy to call wife?'

'H'm! that depends, ye see.'

'What does it depend on, sir?'

'Whether a man is wise or a fool.'

'I can't imagine what you mean.'

'Why, I just mean this, Robert—that any man who would marry Janey, as ye call her, must be out of his mind.'

'Then I am out of mine!' said Robert hotly.

'Do ye tell me seriously that

ye mean to wed the daughter of that madwoman?'

'Mrs. Lilands is not mad. She had a fit last winter, which affected her mind a little; but—'

'Hoots!' interrupted Mr. McCullagh indignantly; 'it's no manner of use, Robert, trying to hoodwink me. If they have taken ye in, it is no reason why they should take me in. I am not blaming ye, remember. Ye're not the first, any more nor ye'll be the last, that has been caught by a pretty face; and I'll do the best I can to help ye out of the mess ye've got into. But ye must do your part. Ye must say good-bye as civilly as may be; and never enter the house again.'

'Never enter the house again!' repeated the young man, as if stupefied. 'Say good-bye civilly! Why should I do either, sir?'

'Because ye don't want to marry the daughter of a lunatic, and yon woman is just as mad as any poor creature in Bedlam. She oughtn't to be left at loose; it's no safe. I'm sure I just sat on thorns the whole time we were there. Ye can't understand, Robert, because maybe ye've never seen the like before; but I have. There lived a woman called auld Betty in Greenock when I was a boy; and though, as a rule, she was counted harmless enough, ye'd only to offend her, and she'd up with a knife, or poker, or hammer, or anything that came handy, and fly at ye like a wild cat.'

'But there is nothing of that sort the matter with Mrs. Lilands,' remonstrated Robert.

'It's no to be imagined what may be the matter with her,' retorted Mr. McCullagh. 'Ye may thank your lucky stars ye took your father out there this day. Leave it all to me, and I'll get ye rid of the trouble ye've made for yourself. It's just a thing impossible ye can marry a madwoman's daughter.'

'But Mrs. Lilands is *not* mad,' persisted Robert; 'and even if she were, there is nothing the matter with her daughter.'

'There is nothing the matter with her at present, as far as I can see,' admitted Mr. McCullagh; 'but neither you nor I nor anybody else could say for how long she might stay safe. That sort of thing runs in the blood—ay, from generation to generation. The wife ye marry may die in a madhouse, and the child born to ye grow a raving lunatic. It's just the one thing, Robert, of which I have a dread and horror unspeakable. Don't answer me now, for I know what ye're going to say, and it is best for me not to speak the words. Think the matter over quietly, and then come to me, and we'll talk about what's best to be done.'

'There is only one thing, sir, to be done,' answered Robert, 'and I mean to do it—namely, marry Miss Lilands the moment she consents to go to church with me.'

'Then all I have got to say is, ye'll have the whole of your life to repent in. No, ye'd better go your own way now; don't come any further with me. We'll only make one another worse if we argue the matter any longer. Ye'll maybe look at things from another light in the morning; at any rate, I hope ye will, with all my heart and soul. Fare ye well, and mind my last words—don't be in too great a hurry to tie a knot with your tongue ye can't loose with your teeth.'

Robert made no audible answer to this conciliatory speech. Turning away without any formal leave-taking, he muttered a remark under his breath, the precise terms of which it was, on the whole, fortunate his father failed to hear.

A TRIP TO ALDERNEY AND THE CASQUETS.

Seldom does the tourist in the Channel Islands think it worth his time or his money to extend his peregrinations to Alderney, or to take a nearer peep at the Casquets than that which he obtains from the deck of a steamer on his passage across to Jersey or Guernsey. He will moon day after day about the *cari luoghi* of these just-named islands, prying into every nook and corner of their coast and inland scenery; he will tramp over Sark until he knows it by heart; he will leave his footprints on the shelly sands of Herm; and he will potter about Jethou, boating, fishing, and shooting sea-fowl; but as to running over from, say, Peter's Port, Guernsey, to Port de Braye, Alderney—than which nothing is easier—or going for a few hours' cruise around the triple lighthouse upon the Cattes Razes, otherwise the Casquet Rocks—no difficult matter either—rarely ever, as I said before, do these jaunts come within the doings of the excursionist; and why? Because he has either read or been told that the islet in question is at best but a wild, desolate, melancholic sort of a place to go to, and that in regard to the beacon-rocks it is wiser to sheer clear of these altogether, so many are the perils from surf and currents and hidden reefs, from eccentric tides and what not beside, that environ them. But hearsays and readings notwithstanding, perhaps I can show how a pleasant enough expedition may be made to the Ehrenbreitstein of the Channel, as Alderney has been named, and how with fair weather, a good boat, and a sufficiently skilful Palinurus, overhauling the Casquets and getting an inkling of the 'life on the ocean wave' of their solitary guardians, may be counted as a portion of the holiday outing of our friend the rambler aforesaid profitably accounted for; at all events, Jack Seton and I thought so, when we accomplished both trips a summer or two ago.

But before I tell my story, let me take the liberty of refreshing the reader's memory in the geography of Alderney, and reminding him that it is situated some twenty odd miles north-east of Guernsey and abreast of that part of fair Normandy which is terminated by Cape la Hague north, and Le Nez de Jobourg south, and that between the island and the mainland runs that narrow, rapid, treacherous channel which we call the Race of Alderney, and some French cartographists Le Passage du Raz Blanchart. A nasty place for ships, this Race; many is the noble one that has gone to Davy Jones's locker in it. Ancient and modern sea-lore is full of such catastrophes; but that of which we all know most is the legend of the loss of the Blanche Nef, in which William of Normandy, King Henry Beauclerc's son, the Prince's sister—some records say his bride—and three hundred souls, among whom were eighteen of the fairest ladies of Normandy, perished on that memorable night of November

1120. I have no intention of repeating the threadbare tale, but if the very best and most touching account be wanted, it will be found in a work written by M. Théodore le Cerf, of the Antiquarian Society of France, entitled *L'Archipel des Iles Normandes.*

There was a capital little steamer, the Courier, with a pleasant and able skipper, Captain W., plying between Peter's Port, Guernsey, and the harbour of Port Braye, at the time when Seton and I went Alderneywards; and if that craft be still on the waters, and going the same route, it is by her that I advise travelling. The passage is interesting and of its kind picturesque. It threads the intricate and dangerous channel of the Little Russel, having the lovely shores of Guernsey on the left side, the islands of Jethon, Herm, and Sark on the right; while astern, in the distance, Jersey looms bold and high. Ahead, out at sea, is that light-tower with which, on a future occasion, we are to become nearer acquainted —the Casquets, to wit; while, rising grandly and loftily, looking rocky and more rocky as we near them, the shores for which we are bound. In less than four hours we are close to their southern and western borders, and enter the Swinge, or, more correctly, La Passe du Singe, an arm of the sea flowing between Alderney and the Burhon islets and shoals—a ticklish channel enough to navigate without knocking a hole in a ship's bottom or stranding her on the shallows; for rocks and reefs are scattered here, there, everywhere: rocks above the waterline, rocks just below it; rocks of every shape and size, sandbanks galore, and a tideway swelling and eddying and racing along at Maelstrom speed. But Captain W. is to the manner born of the Swinge; he knows every inch of it, and all about its habits and vagaries; so cautiously and gingerly he pilots his little vessel, sometimes almost shaving the faces of the cliffs, at others giving them a most respectable offing; and while cleverly performing these tricks of his calling he is not silent either, but points out as we go along every object of interest, and tells yarns anent them. Thus he bids us note, away to the westward there, that high truncated mass of granite: 'The Ortach Rock, gentlemen; the home of stormy petrels and razor-bills and half the birds of the Channel, which actually swarm upon its plateau and slopes. If you want to catch lobsters to perfection, or to haul up a conger-eel as big as a whale, set your pots and your lines round and about the Ortach: both creatures love its neighbourhood dearly. Yonder' (pointing in the direction) 'is the Pierre de Vraic, the safest reef in all La Manche; for, as you see, even in the calmest weather the sea breaks upon it. On our starboard beam is Clanque Bay; and that fort is the battery of the same name, the first of a series of our many Alderney defences. Here we round Mont Tourgee, on which also observe a strong fortification is built. This is Saline Bay we are crossing—small certainly, hardly deserving the name of bay; but still, you will admit, marvellously pretty to look upon, and marvellously healthy too. Now we weather Cape Grosnez, from which juts the Admiralty breakwater, that awfully expensive and nearly useless piece of sea-wall. And now again we glide into the roadstead of Braye, and are alongside the landing-stage. A votre service, messieurs, et au revoir.'

But besides the chatty and agreeable palaver of our kind

skipper, there were among the passengers by the Courier two or three who gave a zest to the short voyage. To begin with, a young bride and her swain, evidently in the very first flush and heyday of the honeymoon. Powers of Dan Cupid, how they spooned! They spooned at the bow, they spooned at the stern; on deck, down below, port, starboard, amidship, openly and unreservedly they billed, cooed, and showed their affection for one another in such a pronounced way, that Seton, twice aforenamed, and I, *Arcades ambo* —Indians both—recalled to mind that capital lay of Aliph Cheem, told in his *Lays of Ind*, anent what he saw on a P. and O. steamer with 'young Sniggles and Mary Jane, his recently wedded wife.' As the reader may not know the 'pome,' I will venture to extract two or three verses from it for his edification:

'At first their spirits appeared to droop,
For it wasn't agreeable weather,
And they groaned and shivered upon the poop,
And went to the side together.

But when it calmed and the bloom appeared
Again on the lady's cheek,
They loveyed and doveyed, and ducked and deared,
From end to end of the week.

They spooned from morn to eventide,
They lived and they breathed on spoon;
When the weather forbad the spooning outside,
They did it in the saloon.

O lucky Sniggles! O happy pair!
'Tis pleasant to be adored;
But to do it in public is hardly fair
To the other folk on board.'

Our Sniggles and his M. J. were quite as demonstrative, but, thank the Fates, the demonstration, in our sight at least, was but very short-lived; we disembarked at Alderney, they went on to Cherbourg. Then there was a 'gent' of the class 'Arry, from whom we derived considerable entertainment. When he found that the sea-gods of La Manche were not likely to exact tribute from him in the shape of indisposition, of which contingency he was at starting much afraid, he came over to where we were sitting, fraternised, and became talkative. He told us that he 'ailed from *H*exeter, where he was in the 'fancy line;' that he had been in Jersey, which he found slow, and in Guernsey, a precious long sight slower; now he was bound to Sherbug, thence to Cong (Caen) and Ruin, and so on to Parish, where he 'oped to square it with a certain cousin of his, 'a *greeset* in a *magazeene di boats* in the Pally Royal, on whom he was nuts.' He was dressed in the very loudest of tweeds, and he held in his hand a Jersey cabbage-stick as thick as the piston-rod of the Courier's engine. That formidable bâton was for the 'ed of a Moosoo who was sweet upon Sophy, the *greeset* aforesaid, and worrying the young lady accordingly. We wished him luck in his love, and a happy issue out of the probable fight with the Frenchman. A young barrister we were wont now and again to see at the Grange Club, and other places in Peter's Port, was also embarked aboard with us, and we improved acquaintances. He was full of anecdote, as most barristers are; and here are two of the many he rattled out. I do not think that they are generally known, but if they have already come within the reader's ken, I crave his indulgence for the repetition. A certain Equity judge is a Cockney, and his speech betrayeth him; in fact, he has not an aspirated *h* in his whole vocabulary. When he was yet at the Bar, he was once engaged as counsel in a case where the infringement on the patent for the manufacture of a dye was in contention. A witness, a

Frenchman guiltless of a word of English, was being examined, and had to explain the process of making. Said the Cockney barrister in question through the interpreter, 'Do I understand you to say, monsieur, that having mixed the ingredients as you describe, as the final step you put the stuff into a crucible and *'eat* it?' and the interpreter, whether intentionally or inadvertently, put the last word as it had been pronounced. 'Bon Dieu!' exclaimed the horrified Gaul; 'mangez le! Comment pouvez-vous le manger? C'est un poison plus sur que l'arsenic, mon avocat.' Mr. Serjeant Channell—I must give his patronymic or the story would lose its point—was leading in a shipping case concerning a vessel named the Helen. Some witnesses called her the Ellen; so did the Serjeant. At last the judge, waxing wroth, inquired, 'Is this ship's name Ellen or Helen? there seems to be a difference of opinion on the point.' Up jumps forthwith a young and witty junior to answer the question. 'Me lud,' says he, 'when she left Rio for London she was certainly called the Helen, but most unhappily her *h* has been lost in the chops of the Channel.'

Landing on the breakwater sheltering the harbour, which is well guarded by three forts of a chain that encircles the island from La Clanque on the west to Fort Essex on the east coast; taking in at a glance that there is much that is attractive in the natural beauty and grandeur of the surroundings, but a great deal more that looks the personification of gloom and blue devils—for there is no bustle, and scarce a soul moving about—we stroll leisurely along the pier and up the road leading to St. Anne, the chief and, indeed, the only town in the land; stopping, however, *en route* to take up our quarters at a small cozy hotel—name forgotten—to which Captain W. had recommended us. He is a judge of comfort, and a connoisseur in beauty, as well as a first-rate sailor, that worthy mariner. We were most satisfactorily entertained—and cheaply—by good Mrs. ——, the hostess; and as for the neat-handed Phyllis of a barmaid, her help, she was the prettiest and smartest damsel we had looked upon that summer in our outings among the Channel Islands. I will not describe her. I could not do her face and figure justice; but I say to the tourist hereabouts, 'Go and see for yourself; and if an Alderney or other youth has not removed her from the inn into his own home in the capacity of wife, you will confess that Hebe was a fright in comparison to Miss Phyllis.' By the bye, I tasted at this hostelry for the first time the Channel Islands *bonne bouche* and dainty dish, conger-eel soup. *Non te amo Sabridi*, spite of the predilections epicures of these parts entertain for you.

With the history, ancient and modern, of Alderney we are all no doubt well acquainted. In the Itinerary of that peripatetic Roman Emperor, Antoninus, who was travelling in these parts in the first century of the Christian era, we find it called Arica, Aurica, Riduma; and in later but yet old enough times, Aurney, Aureney, and Aurigny. Michael Drayton, in his lengthy poem 'Polyolbion' (1662), sings of it as 'fruitful Aurencey, near to the ancient Celtic shores;' and Lord Macaulay, in his 'Armada,' dubs it Aurigny. No matter, we all know it nowadays as Alderney, and connect with it little else than those very wee, pretty, and

expensive 'milky mothers of the herd' for which, with its sister islets, it is famed. Once upon a time, or, to speak by the card, in Henry III.'s reign, half of the island belonged to the King, the other half to the Church. Subsequently the ecclesiastical moiety was subducted, the entire soil became monarchical, and was given in fief to the family of Chamberlain, one of whom, about three centuries ago, ceded for a thousand years all his rights and titles in it to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex; but Queen Elizabeth's Marwood having executed that nobleman, the island became forfeited to the Crown, and was annexed to Guernsey. The Merry Monarch owing loyal service, and probably enough money, to the noble house of De Carteret, bestowed Alderney upon Sir Edward of that ilk, who, with others of his kith and kin, held it until its sale to the Andros family, by whom it was possessed until it passed into the hands of those well-known seigneurs the Le Mesuriers, with whom it remained well cared for until 1825, when once more it merged into an adjunct of Guernsey. From the fact of its being a sort of vidette-post on France, it has always been pretty strongly fortified; but in those comparatively recent days, when Monseigneur Le Prince de Joinville was making his bombastic assertions—*vox et prœterea nihil*—as to invading *perfide Albion*, and the breakwater and a harbour of refuge at Port de Braye were projected, then these fortifications were so considerably increased and strengthened, that it became a sort of jesting *façon de parler* to call Alderney the 'Gibraltar of the Channel.' The before quoted writer, M. le Cerf, takes great exception to this sobriquet, calls it the 'windy suspirations' (*bouffes*) of national pride, and nothing short of a metaphor, which came into existence with the fag-end of a bottle of sherry (*au bout d'une bouteille de sherry*).

Two days actively spent are quite enough to see everything in and around the habitat I am talking about, which is, indeed, but a little more than three miles long, and half a mile or so across. Its terrible iron-bound coasts, west and south—stupendous crags of granitic rock—one gets a good view of coming up the Swinge. Towards the north the cliffs are lower, and the contour of the land more sloping, inviting little valleys and picturesque bays lying between rather tall capes and headlands. Round Point Monize, and eastward, looking towards Normandy, is the really charming, but still somewhat liliputian, Bay and Port of Longy, having erst for its protection Essex Castle — the building of which was cited against Robert Devereux as an act of non-allegiance to 'good Queen Bess'—and in these present days Essex Fort, not far from which stands, or rather hangs, that eccentric freak of cliff formation, La Roche Pendante, a high mass of sandstone jutting from and overhanging the crags at such an angle that it gives the idea of an immediate tumbling over. The Leaning Tower of Pisa is perfectly plumb in comparison with the Hanging Rock of Alderney. The interior of the island is an almost treeless plateau, sectioned into small farms, or rather patches of cultivated land, productive enough of roots and cereals, notwithstanding the sandy nature of the soil. Here, as elsewhere in these Channel Islands, the vraic or seaweed is the grand and universal fertiliser. Although prettily sited, neatly kept, and clean, St. Anne,

town or city, stands first on the roll of places triste and dull I have ever seen, except only Laguna, in the island of Teneriffe.

There may be business and money-making going on in its High-street and Victoria-street, but there are no outward and visible signs of such. Men, women, and children no doubt occupy the houses—some of them pretentious—but they do not show. As there is a Government House, and a Cohue or Court-house, it is fair to infer that some great ones of the city to cap to are in existence; but where, and O where, are these Alderney laddies gone? for we do not see the ghost of one of them. The soldiers of the garrison, why are they not about in scarlet and gold? Is there no such being as a policeman to tramp up and down and make the echo ring with his footfall? We saw none; indeed, the only thing we did see, or cared to see, was the church which a Le Mesurier—*toujours* Le Mesurier in Alderney—has erected as a *monumentum ære perennius* to his time-honoured family, and that structure deserves a less obscure nook and corner of the world than it has. Many of the fortifications will well repay a stroll over; not only are they advantageously placed—Fort Touraille and Fort Albert, for instance—but are good specimens of the engineer's art. In these piping times of peace their garrisons are ridiculously weak, and in the event of war it would take a small army to man them effectively. Stale, flat, and unprofitable must be the life of an officer in this habitat. Certainly he may boat and fish; he can stroll over rugged cliffs and risk his neck in trying to get down to their edges, which mostly, by the way, have little or no fringe of sandy beach. He can, if an antiquarian, hunt up old cromlechs, and delve for Druidical and Roman relics, many of which from time to time have been dug up; if a geologist, he can study granite and syenite, felspar and sandstone, and, so to speak, the testimony of the rocks; and if an artist, he will find plenty of subjects for canvas and brush. But if a thorough mooner, as many an officer is, wanting his club, his lawn-tennis, his morning calls, his afternoon teas, his evening dinners and balls, the saints protect him in the Alderney station, for he will get little or none of them! Two of the indispensables of *la vie militaire*, which, according to the French *chansonette*, the soldier lacks, *le vin et le tabac*, he may obtain here good and cheap; but for the third of the category, *l'amour*, that specialty is unattainable; he must hie elsewhere for it, say to the young-lady element of the sixties and forties of Guernsey, or to that of the Shingles and Rouge Bouillon, St. Helier, Jersey. One word more, and I am done with fruitful Aurency. Here, more than in any other of the Channel Islands, is the patois which goes for French still spoken; a fact which rejoices the heart of the reader's acquaintance, M. le Cerf, though he attributes it to a circumstance which might not be quite so satisfactory to the officials of H.M. Customs. 'It is fortunate,' says he, 'that the Alderney peasant is somewhat of a smuggler, because that will enable him for yet a long while to maintain with our Normandy coast the barter of his productions, and the upkeep of a language the origin of which is common to both.' And now, hurrah for the Casquets!

No weather could have been more charming than the morning of our third day in Alderney, when, aboard of a smart little cut-

ter, we—*fidus Achates* Seton, of course, and your humble servant—left Port de Braye for our sail to these Casquets, distant nine miles due west of the island, but some two or three more from our place of embarkation. The wind was light and southerly, fair to go and fair to return; the sea was smooth; the boat a clipper; and Mrs. —— of the hotel had packed us a goodly sized basket of eatables and drinkables, sufficient for ourselves and Pierre and Henri, our crew. So we anticipated an enjoyable cruise. Sailing along, we were soon abreast of and past the Burhons, flat, inhospitable-looking islands and sandbanks, the largest of some size, but uninhabited save now and again when a fishing-crew runs, from stress of weather, under its lee, and takes refuge in a rude hut built for shelter. A 'wet sheet and a flowing sea,' and our boat is not long in reaching the rocks we have come to peep at; and, credit me, very, very wild, bare, disagreeable ones are they to gaze upon, towering out of the sea, and placed, as if with malice prepense, in the direct course of every ship coming into or going out of the Channel. No matter the oak and triple steel incasing the breast of a bluejacket, he is always glad enough when those terrible impediments in his track are safely weathered; for, notwithstanding the three bright-flashing revolving lights which so clearly tell of their whereabouts by night, spite of the tall shapely tower that points out their dangers by day, and the loud steam fog-horn blowing in dirty weather, the legends of the Casquets can tell of many a mishap and disaster occurring on and about them. Until within the last few years, three old-fashioned lighthouses, built in a triangular shape, and each holding its lamp quaintly yet picturesquely, marked the Casquets; these, however, have now given place to one grand pillar-beacon, only with, however, the same number of lights and with precisely the same arrangement as to the triangle. A white wall encloses the *pharos*—it did the same when there were three of them—and shelters a space whereon a garden flourishes in soil imported from Alderney. This piece of horticultural news, Pierre, our boatman, gives us as we tack and board around the rocks; but we do not land to satisfy ourselves what sort of vegetables and flowers can possibly thrive in an atmosphere composed of brine and so constantly disturbed with violent gales, for the surf is heavy and breaking angrily on the landing-place. Perhaps had Seton and I been cats, or even sailors, we might have sprung ashore, with at most a ducking; but not being either of the feline or marine genus, we declined the experiment, involving as it did the probability of a watery grave. Said Pierre, 'Sirs, there is another landing on the opposite side; try that.' Said we, 'It is enough; make sail for Alderney: we have had our fill of the Cattes Razes.'

Four light-keepers live on the rocks 'far from the madding crowd,' going away in turn for a well-earned outing. The Trinity House looks well after their comfort; houses, pays, and provisions them liberally. Tradition has it that once upon a time a family of man, wife, and children were for twenty-one years the sole custodians of the lights, and never left their home during that time; they fished, they gardened, attended to their duties, and were uncommonly jolly. Their eldest daughter, a sea-nymph of eighteen, at last begged for a holiday out-

ing, and spent it in Alderney, but soon returned to the rocks sated with the bustle and excitement of the 'great world'—save the mark! —as she called that deadly lively island. *Ille terrarum mihi præter omnes angulus ridet.*

'No spot so joyous smiles to me
Of this wide globe's extended shore,'

said she, in other words, to her mamma, when she got back to the lighthouses. But, alas, Miss was fibbing. She had found in Port de Braye metal more attractive than the copper of the lamps she cleaned and furbished; the flash of a certain Alderney youth's eye was brighter now in her sight than that of the revolving catoptric lights she attended to; she was always spying to the eastward for the coming of a small skiff, instead of keeping a sharp look-out on the track of the big homeward and outward bound merchant vessels. So as this state of things was endangering the shipping, pater- and mater-familias thought it advisable to send her off one day as the bride of the young Alderney man aforesaid, and the Casquets knew her no more.

The wind increasing, our cutter soon made good the distance homewards. We remained that night at our comfortable hotel; and next morning, bidding good-bye to Mrs. —— and her handmaiden, promising the one our hearty recommendation for guests, and the other to be on the *qui vive* for an eligible helpmate of a husband, we embarked again in the Courier, and returned to Peter's Port, Guernsey.

HIDE AND SEEK ON THE PAMPAS.

A Perilous Game.

The short South American twilight had given way to the heavy darkness of a starless night, as, dismounting from my tired horse, I gave it over to the charge of one of my native servants, while I ordered another 'peon' to serve me with the never-failing mâte, a tea peculiar to the country, made from the yerba plant, and which is exceedingly refreshing, especially to the exhausted traveller. Certainly the exhilarating effect of the tea was keenly appreciated by me; for I had just returned from a long day's ride on horseback over the surrounding prairies, having had a futile search for some horses belonging to me, which had either strayed away the previous night, or else been stolen by some one of the numerous bands of Indians who were then scouring the neighbouring pampas.

My estancia, or farm, situated as it was in a lonely part of the wild province of Cordova, had frequent visits from detachments of roving Indians, who, while never daring to venture close up to the house itself, owing to a plentiful and ever-ready supply of firearms I always kept 'on guard,' very often succeeded, especially during the night, in helping themselves to some of my cattle.

These Indians, I may here remark, always find a ready market for stolen horses and oxen in the neighbouring country of Chili; and the nice little arrangement they make is, when about to return, to steal all the live-stock they can lay hands on there, and dispose of the same to Government agents, when they get back to the Argentine Republic. The English Government, by the way, is not the only one whose efforts are ineffectual in putting a stop to illegal traffic, whether such be in horseflesh or, say, false jewelry. My only neighbour happened to be a native of the country, whose rancho was barely half a mile from my farm. Juan Arroyo was a quiet inoffensive man, owning a few horses and cows, and some twenty or thirty acres of land, which he annually sowed in wheat and maize. Generally speaking, the natives of the province of Cordova are a bad untrustworthy lot; but I was particularly fortunate in having such a one as Don Juan in close proximity, as he was certainly greatly superior to most of his fellow-countrymen. Occasionally of an evening he would come over and ply me with many a question about England and the English. His want of general knowledge, outside of his immediate local experience, was deplorable. For instance, never having seen any sheet of water larger than a small lake or river, his curiosity as to what the sea was like caused him to make various queries regarding the same. 'Señor,' he would ask, in his Spanish dialect, 'how many yards (*cuantos varas*) across is the sea between my country and your Inglaterra?' or, again, 'Is the sea very deep? Perhaps,' he would continue, 'it would

take me over the head!' His height was about five feet. When I tried to explain to him that we did not measure the ocean by yards, much less feet, as its extent was much greater than his own far-stretching prairies, he would only shake his head and say, 'Caramba!' a favourite native ejaculation which is applied to everything in general and nothing in particular.

This untravelled individual being, I may say, the hero of this sketch, it is better that he should be particularly introduced. As I have already implied, Don Juan Arroyo was a well-meaning native, very unsuspicious and obliging. His señora, a good-natured, dark-skinned, little Spanish beauty, was the proud mother of three fat chubby girls, all still very young, the last-comer, in fact, being yet in its babyhood. While Don Juan was some forty-five years of age, his handsome partner would be at least twenty-five years his junior; but notwithstanding the great disparity in their respective ages, they lived very happily together.

Having finished my mâte, I partook of a hearty supper, in which I was joined by my only guest at that time. This visitor rejoiced in the appellation of 'General' Green. That he was a real General I had grave doubts, notwithstanding his assurances that the title was earned by him when 'in the Chinese wars.' I happened to meet with an old officer in the P. and O. service, who declared to having seen this same Mr. Green serving on board a vessel in Chinese waters in the noble capacity of ship-cook's assistant! Whether Mr. Green was entitled to any military title or not does not here signify. He had a most wonderful capacity for having some personal adventure, always to his own glory, ready to relate in connection with any subject that might turn up, and he certainly was the most incorrigible and inveterate liar—the expression is hard, but necessary—I ever met with during a long stay abroad; and I may safely affirm that, besides the notorious Yankee story-teller, I have met with a good few individuals who can—well, prevaricate occasionally.

General Green (to be polite) and I had concluded our meal, and were lighting our pipes for a go-to-bed smoke, when the still night air was suddenly pierced by the shrill tones of a female voice screaming excitedly, 'Patron, patron!' Rushing from the house, and calling upon the General to follow me, I quickly made my way across the yard and out into the open camp, in the direction whence the cries for assistance came. I soon met the woman, whom I recognised as the Señora Arroyo already alluded to. She was hurrying to my farm for help, and was evidently in great distress of mind. The moment I came in sight she beckoned to me wildly, crying out, 'Make haste, for the love of the Virgin Mary! my husband is being murdered!' and then, overcome with grief and terror, she sank down in a swoon on the cold damp prairie-ground. Leaving the unhappy woman to recover as best she could, the 'General' and I made all possible speed for the little neighbouring rancho, whence she had no doubt come to seek help.

In order to relate the events as they actually took place, it will now be necessary to show what had happened of such pressing nature as to induce Mrs. Juan Arroyo to seek my assistance in the summary manner she did.

Don Juan and his family were peacefully seated in the only room

of their small rancho, enjoying the irrepressible mâte, when they heard the well-known tramp of approaching horses. A native herd-boy who lived with them opened the door of the hut, and looking out, saw three horsemen ride up, and while two of them halted some few yards off, the third came close to the lad, and ordered him to fetch a light for his cigarette. The little fellow, retiring into the house, soon returned with a spoon, in which lay a red-hot cinder (native fashion), and gave it to the stranger. Don Juan, although surprised at such late and unceremonious visitors, did not feel at all suspicious of them; but his wife, naturally more nervous than he, went near to the open doorway, trying to obtain a better view of the horseman. The latter kept carefully out of the ray of light which the room-lamp now cast over the threshold; but as he stooped, cigarette in mouth, to get a light from the cinder, which sent a bright little glare from the pewter spoon, the slight reflection shone for a moment on his face, which was sufficient time, however, to show the observant wife that the man had a mask on. She at once told her husband of this. He, now growing suspicious, was just going to call his serving-lad inside and close the house-door, when the boy shouted out that the three strangers wished to see the 'patron.' Don Juan Arroyo did not feel comfortable on hearing this request, and his señora warned him not to go outside. He was uncertain which course to adopt, when one of the horsemen, crying out to him to have no fear of them, dismounted, and advancing, held out both of his hands to show he had no weapons. My neighbour, still reluctant, went slowly outside, not making any reply to his wife's earnest entreaties to remain with her. The stranger, taking Don Juan's hand in his, gave it, by way of salutation, a hearty shake, retaining hold of it, till his two companions, who had suddenly dismounted, placed themselves on either side of the astonished farmer. Each held a long knife, or rather a dagger, in readiness, daring him to move an inch on pain of instant death. The third Gaucho, or native robber, now produced a lasso, with which he proceeded to tie Don Juan hand and foot, fastening the lasso in a coarse knot just over his chest. They then laid him on the ground, and again cautioned him to neither move nor utter a sound, else he would be a dead man. He could see they were all three masked, which made it likely that they were known in these parts, and wished to avoid identification. After frankly explaining to my unfortunate neighbour that they did not wish to murder him—all they wanted was any valuables that might be in his house, including his handsome little señora, whom they intended carrying off as well—the three Gauchos, leaving Don Juan lying on his back in impotent wrath, now entered the rancho, causing the terrified children to rush out into the dark night screaming with fear. Mrs. Juan Arroyo, however, was gone. Watching her opportunity, she had slipped by in the darkness, and made at her best speed for my estancia, where she hoped to get assistance that might yet be in time to save her husband. Don Juan, who had taken note of the lasso being tied across his chest, contrived, whenever the Gauchos had left him, to unfasten the knot with his teeth; and just as the three robbers, missing the señora, emerged angrily from the rancho, he, slipping from his

bonds, leapt on to his feet, and made for a gateway that led into a small wood in the vicinity of his hut. While two of the now enraged Gauchos went off in search of Don Juan's wife, the other one gave chase to her husband. It was a quick run, but a very short one. The Gaucho was gaining fast on Don Juan, notwithstanding that the latter made every effort to reach the shelter of the wood, where he knew every little nook and corner, and hoped to baffle his pursuer. He also knew that, the gate being broken, nothing would impede his way; and he was very thankful for this, running harder than ever for the gaping gateway. Miserable wretch! When within an inch or two of it he suddenly remembered having stretched a wire across from post to post, in order to prevent his horses from straying out. He made an awful effort to stop himself, but in vain. The wire caught him in the stomach, doubling him up, and sending him flying head over heels away into space. His pursuer, now close upon him, was running at a still swifter pace; he became intensely interested, as well as considerably astounded, at the wonderful evolutions of the unhappy Don Juan; and thinking the latter would bound altogether out of sight, and not noticing the almost invisible but treacherous wire, put on a terrific spurt, and—well, the Gaucho thought at first that an engine and twenty crowded carriages and luggage-vans had gone right through him; then he found himself shooting in every possible direction and every impossible position, until eventually he came to the ground with a 'bump' that rendered him unconscious for some seconds. Don Juan, meanwhile, picked himself up as fast as he could, and, holding his stomach pathetically with both hands, ambled painfully into the wood.

Mrs. Juan Arroyo feared some of the Gauchos would start in pursuit of her, and she knew that her light-coloured dress would betray her whereabouts should they get anywhere near; which they were very likely to do, as she had, in her extremity, shouted for help, and her cries would no doubt assist the Gauchos in their search. Hastening on now in silence, the terrified señora could not help casting glances behind to see if her pursuers were in sight. Not long was she kept in suspense; for presently she heard the sound of advancing horses, and could soon discern two of the mounted Gauchos straight on her track. As she passed over an old anthill, the unhappy woman shrieked again in her fright, for she felt the mound giving way beneath her; and, had she not by a great effort got over the treacherous part, she would have sunk in the loose unstable earth, and fallen an easy prey to her pursuers. They were now shouting loudly to her to stop; and in their eagerness they did not notice the disused anthill, and came right upon it, when, both horses attempting to pass over at the same time, the weakened mound gave way, falling in suddenly, and causing both steeds to come heavily to the ground, unseating their riders, who were so intent on the chase that they had omitted to use ordinary caution when passing over unknown ground. Here was a temporary respite for the fugitive, at any rate; and, taking full advantage of the mishap, again she renewed her cries for assistance as she neared my estancia. The Gauchos' mutual spill must have been very severe, as they gave up the pursuit.

It was at this point that General Green and I fell in with the terrified señora, and unceremoniously leaving her, as before mentioned, set off for the native rancho.

Being well acquainted with the way, my friend and I were not long in arriving at our destination. All was quiet, until, lying down, I put my ear to the ground, when I distinctly heard the sound of galloping horses. In this position I listened attentively for some time, while I made certain by the decreasing reverberations that the horses were going further off. As I rose the 'General' suddenly grasped my arm, and, drawing his revolver, pointed nervously at a mysterious-looking object some ten yards distant, and which appeared to be moving very slightly, however. The night was dark; but certainly we could make out a great resemblance to a human body which the 'object' bore, only it seemed to want both head and feet and—yes, it *was* moving. General Green, for an old soldier, was a terrible coward, and did not bear himself like a 'warrior bold.' Overcome with fear, he leant against me for support, while the hand that held his revolver shook sufficiently to have caused him to miss a haystack two yards off, should he pull the trigger. Not having much faith in my companion's accuracy of aim, should he have occasion to fire, I drew my own revolver, and calling out in Spanish that I would fire in ten seconds if no response was made, I commenced counting out 'One—two—three,' &c., in a loud voice. When I had counted the ninth second, I advanced towards the 'enemy.' The 'General' prudently refrained from accompanying me. Becoming very incredulous as to the mysterious figure being anything animate, I walked right up to—a dark poncho or cloak, which hung from a low projecting rafter that stuck out from the gable of the rancho, swaying gracefully to and fro in the gentle night breeze! Recognising the poncho as belonging to my neighbour, Don Juan Arroyo, and remembering that he frequently used this same obtruding rafter as a convenient clothes-peg, I felt very much annoyed at my ridiculous suspicions, and tried to relieve my wounded feelings by informing the now boldly advancing 'General' that he was a 'confounded idiot' as well as a 'drivelling humbug.'

Entering the native hut, General Green discreetly following well in the rear, I found no one within; so returning to the yard, I called out for any one that might be in concealment to show himself. Suddenly there was a rustle in some brushwood lying near, and the snapping of a dry twig or two. The sound was so quick and close to us that the 'General' was quite taken aback.

'Goodness gracious mercy!' he cried, running behind a convenient tree, and letting his revolver drop to the ground, where it 'went off,' the bullet, however, fortunately not being stopped by either of us. Then a form rushed out of the brushwood at a terrific pace, causing the unfortunate 'General' to mutter something about 'Jerusalem!' as he set to climbing the tree with the zeal and agility of a supple monkey. On my explaining to my now exalted companion that it was only a fox, who no doubt, alarmed by the explosion of the pistol, was evidently making hasty tracks for his lair, the 'General' said 'he merely went up the tree to have a better look-out, and would remain there as sentry in the mean time.'

I had just prevailed on the

'General' to come down from the tree, as he could be of no earthly use up there on such a dark night, when the poor wretch suddenly groaned in tribulation and terror, as he directed my attention to a crouching figure that slowly emerged from the brushwood. My companion was so intensely terrified, that he could not command sufficient motive-power to return to his leafy haven of refuge. He collapsed and came to the ground, a shaking mass of helpless horror. I thought I felt myself catching the infection of fear from the dauntless General Green, and again drew my revolver, as I challenged the advancing figure.

'Is that you, Don Jorge?' whined a melancholy voice; and the crouching form opened itself out a little, and disclosed to me a sickly representation of Don Juan Arroyo. 'Are the Gauchos gone?' he continued. 'And O, tell me, Don Jorge, what have they done with my wife and children?'

He had no sooner finished the question when his youngsters, recognising their father's voice, came running from out a thicket, where they had concealed themselves. The little girls had actually carried their baby sister with them. The happy father threw his arms around them, and the wretched old 'General' dropped a sympathetic tear. I was delighted to see the señora herself appear upon the scene. She, on recovering from her swoon, had made all haste after us, and just arrived at the most opportune moment.

Neither the 'General' nor myself waited to congratulate Don Juan. In conclusion, I may say that the Gauchos, evidently aware of the 'armed foreigners' from the estancia being on the alert, did not return to the rancho. I cannot say how the unhappy Gaucho fared who came in contact with the wire gateway. He, perhaps, eventually grew straight again; but poor Don Juan, for many a week afterwards, complained of mysterious rumblings inside his body, and would double up on the slightest provocation.

A DAY'S SPORT.

Hickman of the Treasury and Wycombe of the War Office were not acquainted; but they had a mutual friend who was first cousin to a noble lord, and the said noble lord had a fine estate and capital shooting in Scotland.

Both Hickman and Wycombe determined on visiting the 'Land o' Cakes' for their holiday, and each indulged, all unknown to the other, in a fervent hope that their mutual friend, the cousin of the noble lord, would be able to procure a little sport for them.

Hickman had a two days' start of Wycombe, and found himself in a charmingly situated and rather dirty country inn, a few miles from the coveted shooting, on the very morning when the noble lord received a letter from his cousin. In this epistle the cousin regretted that he could not get down until the twelfth himself; but begged to recommend to his lordship's notice his very particular friend Mr. Wycombe of the War Office, who was a keen sportsman, and would be found at the inn in the village.

The noble lord read and grunted over this letter, being one of a considerable number lying before him on the breakfast-table, all hinting, more or less broadly, for shooting.

'Suppose I must ask the fellow,' he remarked somewhat gloomily to his noble Countess, seated opposite, and smiling blandly upon a crowd of petitions for her money and patronage, which she opened and threw aside for further consideration.

'What fellow?'

'O, a friend of Charlie's, a Government-office man, Wycombe.'

By this time the Countess was immersed in the description of a friend's wedding, and the conversation dropped.

The day after, when the noble Earl looked for his cousin's letter, it was found to have been torn up, and he had forgotten the name of the guest he wished to invite.

'Must drive to the inn—not likely to be more than one Government-office fellow there on spec,' he soliloquised; but, as you know, he reckoned without his host.

'Yes,' said the smiling landlady. 'There was an English gentleman there; and she knew he was come for the shooting, with his guns and bag and a'.'

'Confound his impudence!' muttered the Earl, and then asked aloud, 'What name did you say?'

'Hickman, my lord; he is out just now, but he'll be right pleased your lordship has speered for him.'

'Thank you, I'll send down a note;' and away drove the mighty man, muttering, 'Hickman! Hickman! sounds like the name.'

When little Hickman received that coroneted note with its courteous invitation to join the shooting-party next day, he was almost beside himself. He read and re-read the epistle; he examined his very new shooting equipment with admiring minuteness; placed himself in various

attitudes before the dingy-looking glass in the inn parlour, and felt certain that he had been right to order knickerbockers, and that his tailor's misgivings as to the size of his calves were impertinent and unfounded.

The landlady had to restrain the ardour of her guest next morning, for he was up by six o'clock; but she succeeded in impressing upon him that all his lordship's party would make a hearty breakfast before starting, and that he had better do the same. While the inevitable ham and eggs were cooking for Hickman, Wycombe arrived, also bearing 'gun, bag, and a'.' He was shown into the inn parlour, where he deposited his belongings, hung up his hat, and demanded 'something to eat.' So more ham and eggs were set fizzing in the pan, and the dusty traveller went to his room to refresh himself before breakfast.

The advent of Wycombe, a big stalwart man, had made Hickman a little uneasy; but he surveyed himself once more in the glass, roughed up his short sandy hair to add to his height, and with a smile of conscious beauty murmured, 'Those large creatures lack symmetry,' and returned to his table complacently.

'Any letters for me?' inquired Mr. Wycombe of the dingy waitress who brought in his breakfast.

No, there were no letters.

'Odd, that; Charlie was certain I should find one,' thought the War Office man, seating himself.

Hickman was one of those irrepressibles who cannot leave people alone.

'Come for the shooting, sir?' he inquired.

'Yes—ah—at least probably,' replied Wycombe.

'Ah! I'm just off myself to the Castle. Glorious weather for the twelfth! Are you going out to-day?'

'Can't say; too hungry to think of anything but my breakfast,' mumbled Wycombe discouragingly; and happily for him, the hundredth opening Hickman's watch had endured that morning showed him it was time to be off. He fussily collected what he intended taking, and Wycombe watched him with some amusement carrying his gun with a reverence that approached timidity.

Hickman was courteously welcomed, and his host regretted that his cousin, Charlie Norman, would not be with them till midday. Then, after much smiling and bowing, Hickman found himself shunted off with a keeper and an old Scotch gentleman with a white beard, both of whom kept eyeing him as he jauntily stepped along between them with an expression he could not understand. At last, as they came to a standstill, and the little Treasury man wheeled round with some choice expressions as to the beauty of the scenery, the old Scotch gentleman inquired,

'Is yer gun loaded?'

'Yes—O, yes—quite ready!' responded Hickman cheerfully.

'Then wud ye have the kindness to keep the muzzle awa' from my ankles?'

'Certainly; dear me, yes,' nervously ejaculated Hickman; and there came over his face a certain shadow of indecision and uncertainty, followed by a desperate resolve to overcome the difficulty. He edged nearer to the keeper, and, slipping a coin into his hand, said, with an attempt at off-handedness,

'Which—ah—way do you consider altogether the best—ah—for carrying a gun?'

Donald touched his bonnet for the money, and then whispered soothingly,

'I think, sir, if ye'll excuse *me*, ye had better just fire it off noo, while nae harm's dune; they guns are awfu' dangerous weapons.'

If the advice was taken, it was not then, but at some quiet moment when Hickman might have been supposed to be aiming at a bird.

At luncheon Charlie Norman was present, and, looking round for his friend Wycombe, he espied Hickman.

'How the—' he began, when his wonder, about to be expressed in language more forcible than polite, was checked by Hickman's vociferous thanks for the pleasure he had procured him.

'Awfully kind of you, because you didn't promise, you know!'

A few words with the noble Earl explained the position, and a messenger was despatched to the inn for Wycombe, who, when he arrived, was thus greeted by Hickman,

'Hulloa! who'd have thought of seeing *you* here?'

An irrepressible smile broke over the faces of one or two guests; and the War Office man bowed gravely, and expressed a hope that his new acquaintance had left a few birds out of pity for those who did not enjoy his advantages in the morning.

Even Hickman saw something was wrong, and when he returned to the inn at night, and found that all Wycombe's traps had been conveyed to the Castle, he was convinced that something was *very* wrong. Having passed a weary day without receiving another invitation, he departed for the south, and wisely practised his efforts at shooting among the rabbits on a farm in Kent; and I hear that a great many of those escaped.

M. D.